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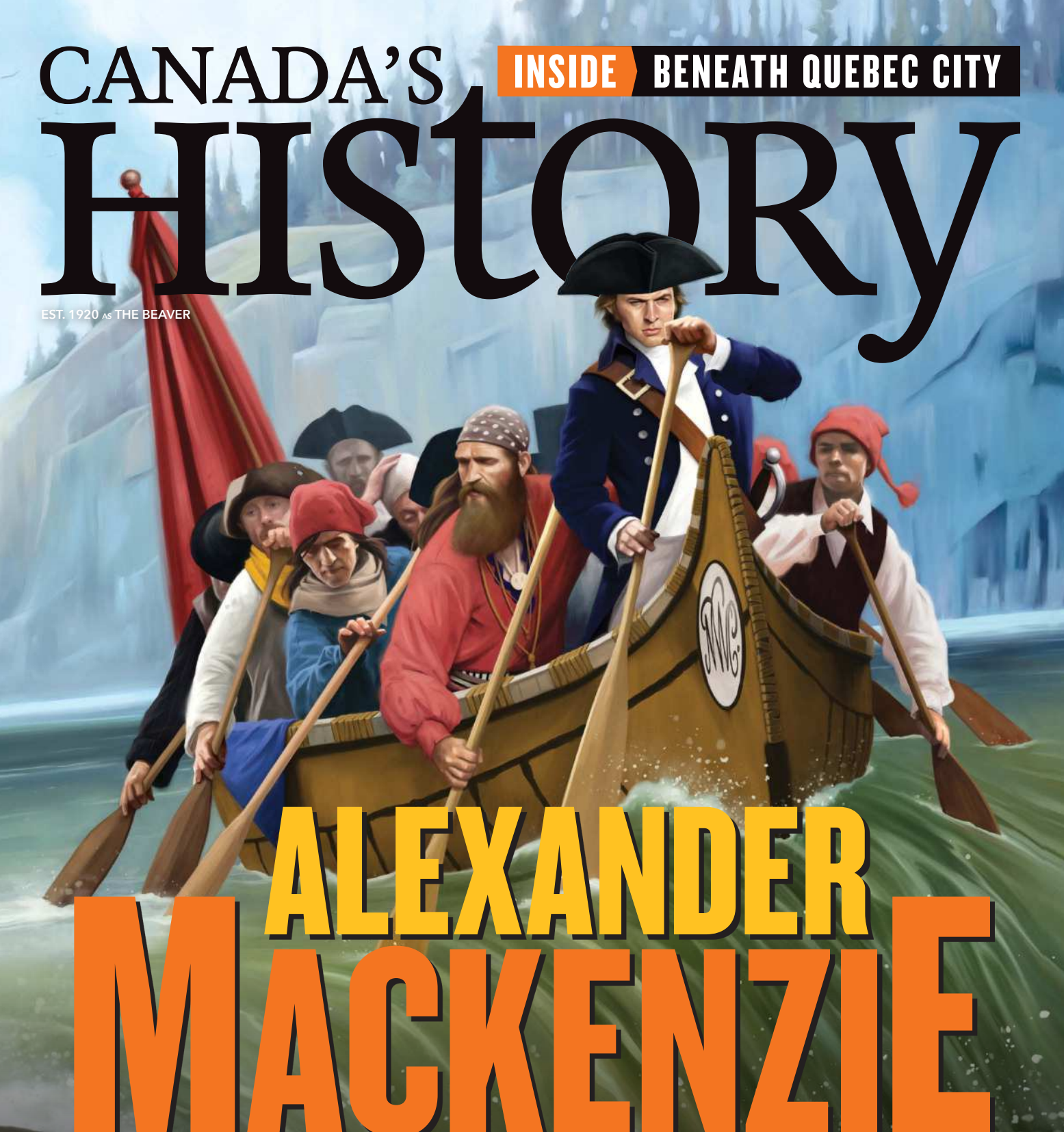

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On the cover

A re-imagined scene of Alexander Mackenzie's 1793 trek in a canoe paddled by voyageurs, painted in 2022 by Robert Carter.

TORONTO STAR / TSPA_0032698F

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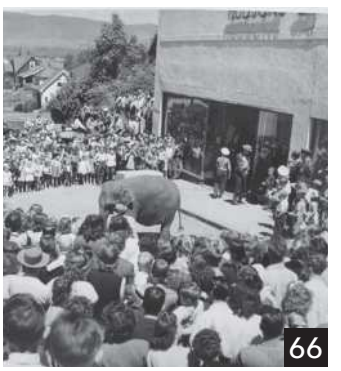

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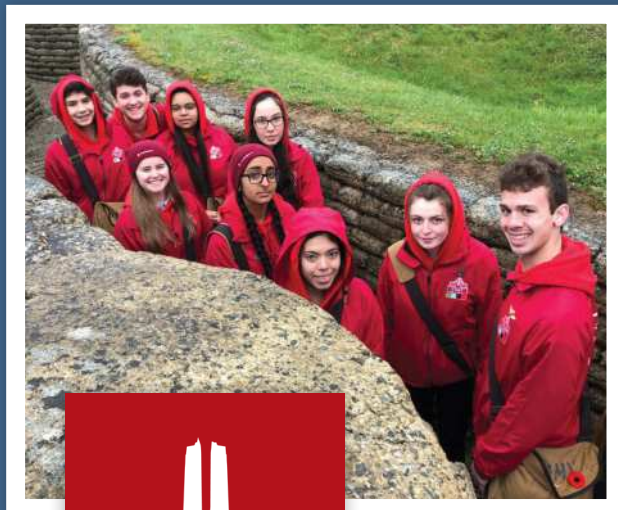

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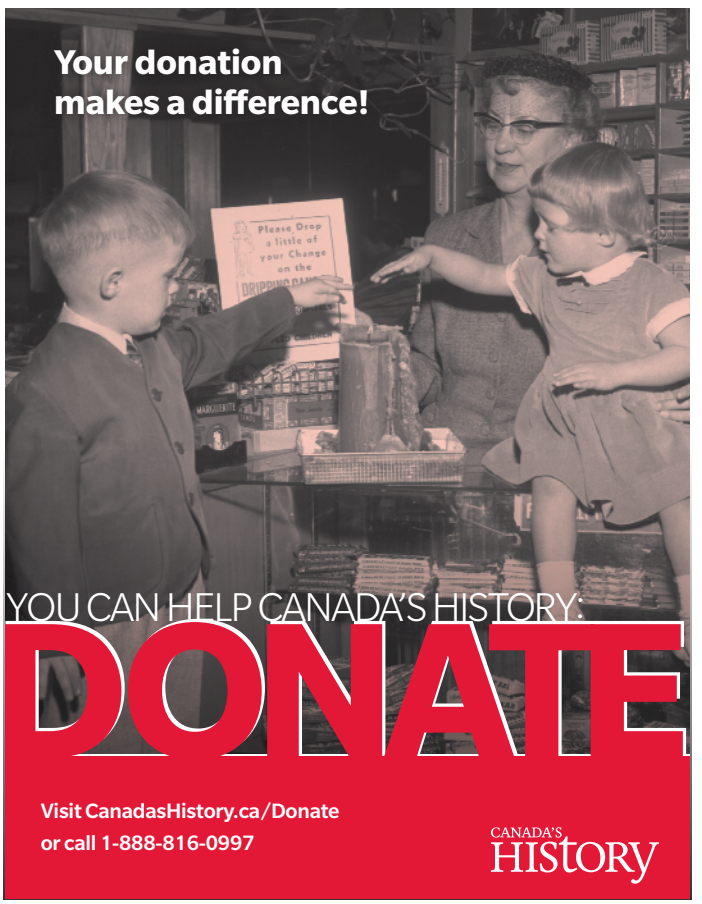

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Captain James Kirk (centre, wearing gold) is surrounded by *Enterprise* crew members in a scene from *Star Trek*.

To boldly go

By the time I was old enough to watch TV, *Star Trek*, which ran for only three seasons between 1966 and 1969, had already been cancelled. But in the late 1970s I was finally able to watch reruns of what would become one of my favourite shows. To this day, I can still recite by memory James T. Kirk's earnest pledge "to explore strange new worlds, to boldly go where no man has gone before."

The swashbuckling starship captain, played by Canadian William Shatner, led every team and single-handedly saved the universe countless times. Or did he?

In reality, Kirk didn't go it alone — he was helped by his heroic crew, officers like Spock, Uhura, and Scottie the engineer. Even the nameless red-shirted security guards did their part by saving Kirk from alien threats.

In a way, Kirk is like many of the real-life explorers who dominated the pages of history textbooks for generations. Presented as solo acts, explorers like Samuel de Champlain and John Rae actually relied heavily on the expertise and assistance of their support teams, as well as the Indigenous peoples they met while "discovering" new lands.

In this issue, we recall the story of Alexander Mackenzie, who, in the late-eighteenth century, became the first European to cross the continent north of Mexico. In "Exploration and Empire," historian Barry Gough follows Mackenzie's gruelling journey from Fort Chipewyan, in northern Alberta, across the treacherous mountain passes and river gorges of the continental divide, to the Pacific Ocean at the mouth of the Bella Coola River in British Columbia.

As Gough shows, Mackenzie relied heavily on his team of voyageur paddlers and First Nations hunters, interpreters, and guides. Crucially, he also listened to the Indigenous peoples whom he met along the way. In some cases, their advice likely saved the lives of Mackenzie and his crew.

Elsewhere in this issue, we explore the surprising story of salt deposits on the prairies, get tangled up in the history of hairstyles, and even ride the rails across Canada with one of silent film's greatest showmen.

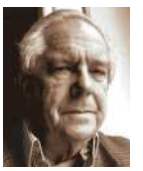
As for Mackenzie, at one point in his trip, he was warned against descending the Fraser River, then known as Tatouche Tesse. "The Indigenous people warned that going downriver on the wild and furious Tatouche Tesse would lead to certain death," Gough writes. Mackenzie wisely backtracked and took a safer route. In this way, he certainly was no Captain Kirk. The *Enterprise*'s captain would have stubbornly stayed the course, while losing half of his away team.

Mackenzie's men all made it home safe and sound. That, surely, is the best way to explore "strange new worlds."

Mark Reid

CONTRIBUTORS

Patrick Carroll is the author of "The Quickening Flavour." A cultural resources advisor with Parks Canada, Carroll lives in Fort Smith, N.W.T., and works on projects related to national parks and historic sites. His article is part of a research project on the cultural history of natural salt deposits in Wood Buffalo National Park.



Barry Gough wrote "Exploration and Empire." A historian, biographer, and professor emeritus at Wilfrid Laurier University in Waterloo, Ontario, he is the author of *First Across the Continent: Sir Alexander Mackenzie* and other accounts of trade and exploration. Gough is a fellow of the Society for the History of Discoveries.

Gare Joyce is the author of "The Railrodder." He is a writer and cinephile based in Kingston, Ontario. A former *Globe and Mail* columnist, he has written for the *New York Times* and the *Christian Science Monitor*, among other publications. He's currently working on a typically self-deprecating memoir for Audible.

Jo McCutcheon wrote "Hair in the Press." She holds her doctorate in Canadian history from the University of Ottawa, where she also teaches part-time while continuing to research clothing, hair, and identity. In 2017, she joined the Association of Canadian Archivists as its executive director.

Cheryl Thompson wrote "Shear Style." She is an assistant professor in performance at The Creative School in Toronto and the author of *Uncle: Race, Nostalgia, and the Politics of Loyalty* and *Beauty in a Box: Detangling the Roots of Canada's Black Beauty Culture*. She is also a member of the Royal Society of Canada's College of New Scholars, Artists, and Scientists.

ALAMY STOCK PHOTO BDWYTB

Notes and appreciation

Hedley Rainnie's 1943 portrait of Portia White, which now hangs in Government House in Halifax.

You can't imagine the thrill I got when I saw the picture of contralto Portia White on the cover of my very first copy of *Canada's History*.

My family lived in Halifax during the time White was taking lessons from Dr. Ernesto Vinci. My mother, Margaret Sinclair Rogers, was one of the accompanists in his voice studio.

The Vincis were good friends of ours, and my mother and I (then a teenager) would often go to their home on a Saturday afternoon to listen to the Metropolitan Opera on CBC. Mrs. Vinci always served tea with white rolled sandwiches, filled with a red or green cream filling!

You have provided such a wonderful memory for me. I hope you have great success with *Canada's History*.

Jocelyn Roberts Pritchard
via email

Reel appraisal

As a retired filmmaker, I was pleased to find your excellent article about a 1928 Canadian film produced in Trenton, Ontario ("Reel Failure," February-March 2022). The background information regarding the trials and tribulations of such an ambitious early Canadian film was most interesting.

Because of my interest in this great piece of Canadian history, I searched for and was able to locate and view the complete film on YouTube. In spite of the fact that it's a silent movie, I was able to enjoy this somewhat-forgotten film and therefore disagree with your article's conclusion that it's a failure.

Audiences of the time, I'm sure, appreciated the fine script and storyline as did I. The staging, lighting, camera work, and special effects are excellent. It's certainly difficult for a viewer today to avoid any negative subjective judgment of actors who, at the time, had to adopt exaggerated facial expressions to convey meaning to their unheard dialogue.

That being said, I must report that *Carry on Sergeant!* is a fine example of early Canadian filmmaking.

George Dunbar
Toronto

The full picture

The illustration on page 28 of the February-March edition of *Canada's History* (in the article "Moses in Canada," by Nancy Payne) is identified as "A cartoon of American abolitionist John Brown...."

It is actually from a 1940 mural painted by the American artist John Steuart Curry in the Kansas State Capitol building in Topeka, Kansas.

Graham Taylor, professor emeritus
Trent University
Peterborough, Ontario

Email comments to editors@CanadasHistory.ca or write to *Canada's History*, Bryce Hall Main Floor, 515 Portage Avenue, Winnipeg, MB R3B 2E9 Canada.

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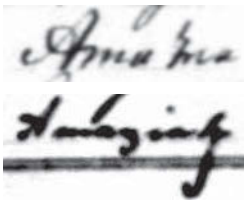
Going off script

Tips and tricks for deciphering even the messiest handwriting. *by Paul Jones*

What's the name of the person recorded in these two entries from nineteenth-century Canadian censuses?

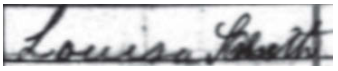


I love this puzzler, which was recently posted on the Ontario Ancestors Facebook page by Karla Buckborough, CEO of the Cavan Monaghan Public Libraries located southwest of Peterborough, Ontario.

It illustrates almost all the common problems in deciphering handwritten documents — indifferent penmanship, inconsistent spelling, archaic words, extraneous markings, and, as with many images viewed online, antiquated digitization and unconvincing authorized transcriptions.

At least the names had not faded away to nothingness, as in this example.

Family historians encounter similar problems all the time. I recently had occasion to study all people named Schuth in nineteenth-century English census enumerations. I concluded that there were more Smiths incorrectly identified as Schuth than there were Schuths correctly transcribed. In the following case, Louisa "Schuth" was preceded in the enumeration by five other members of the same household who were clearly named and correctly transcribed as Smith. Go figure!



Much depends on who did the recording. Everyday people and official registrars typically occupy opposite ends of the legibility spectrum, with lawyers, priests, and enumerators somewhere in the middle but unpredictably so.

Bad penmanship or slapdash transcribing can be a bother even when you know precisely whom you're looking for. Below is the name of one of my ancestors, a Davis indexed as "Daerr."

No amount of searching the database for Davis would find him.

Enough whining. How do we overcome these problems?

Most people's natural tendency is to enlarge the image of indecipherable text by an order of magnitude in the hope that size will confer legibility.

That won't achieve much beyond the point that easy words in a document can be read comfortably.

Playing around with settings such as brightness and contrast may help.

For me, flipping an image from positive to negative, or vice versa, sometimes jolts my brain into seeing things differently. Your best bet, though, is to work from the known to the unknown.

Find words in the document that you can identify with near certainty, such as dates or familiar names. Study how the scribe constructed various letters and letter combinations.

Can you find similar shapes in the illegible text? Can you exclude letters because the scribe has a distinctive way of writing them? Work methodically through the problem text.

If you're thorough, you will eventually arrive at a conjecture or a small set of possibilities that are consistent with all the other writing in the same hand within the same document.

To return to our puzzler, the official transcribers of the two images suggested that the names are Amaza and Annaziak, respectively — neither of them probable-sounding for an Irish-Canadian lad of the era.

Using the letter-by-letter technique described above, I conjectured Amazia and Amaziah. (Note that I discounted the vertical squiggle at the end of the second example as an extraneous mark.)

Another researcher, meanwhile, had pointed out that Amaziah was a Biblical name. A third investigator had found the death record of an Amaziah with the same surname, and, while he was clearly not the same person, it seems he may have been a relative. As I write, the matter is not yet settled, but the case for Amaziah is strengthening.

How do you know when you're right? The gold standard is to find the conjectured transcription unmistakably present in other records.

This will usually entail whole-family research, for instance by tracking known and more readily identifiable relatives, whether parents, siblings, a spouse, or children, in the hope of serendipitously stumbling across the mystery person.

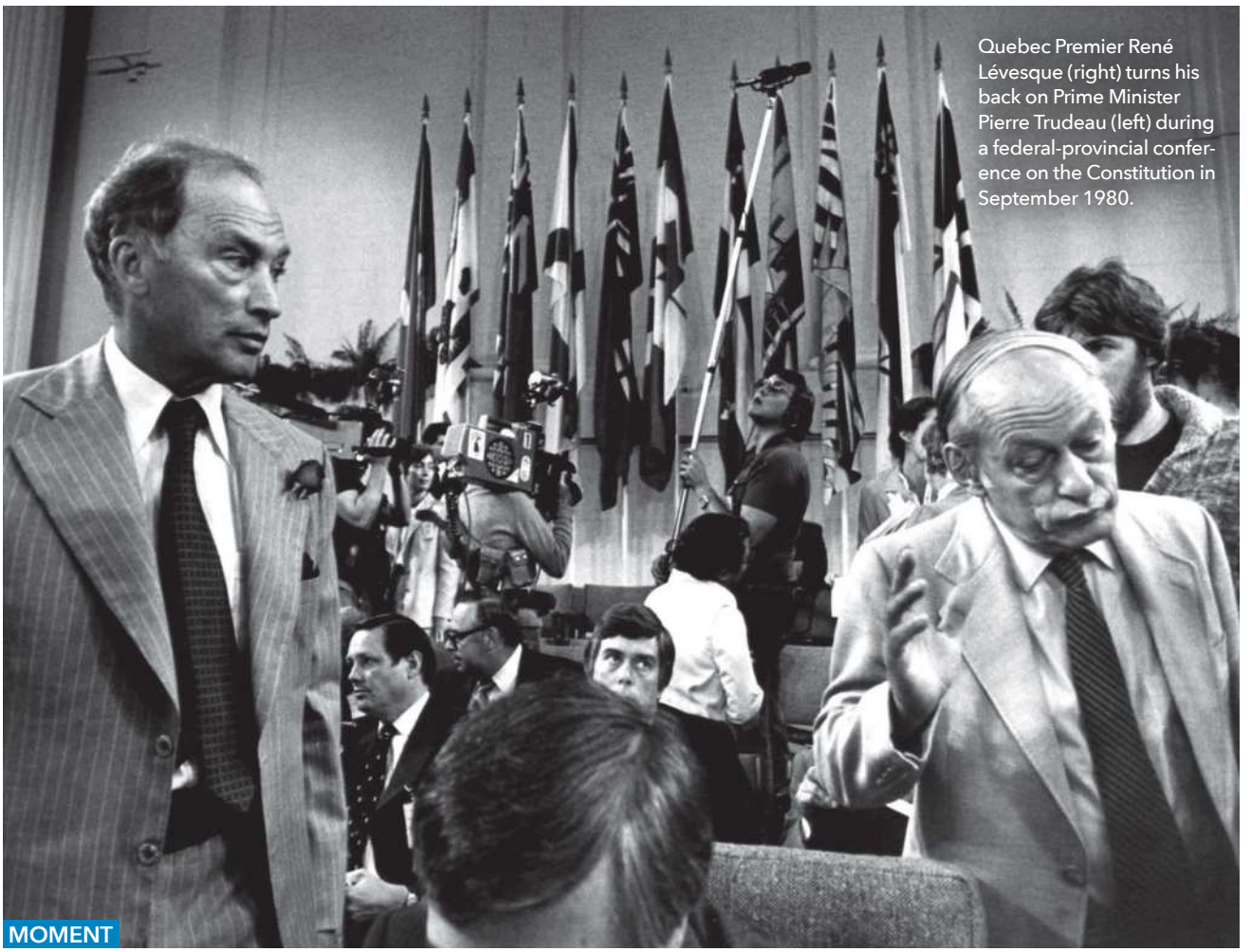
By the way, whole-family research is also the best method for finding known people whose names were muddled. My improbable "Daerr" ancestor was eventually found in a household with a grandmother and aunts.

Not all failed attempts at deciphering sloppy penmanship are irritating. I was amused to find this transcribed occupation for someone I was recently researching: "Arty & self employing 2 boys 1 woman." Huh?

Closer inspection revealed that a fair reading was: "Att[orne]y & Sol[icito]r employing 2 Cl[er]ks."

Paul Jones, a retired publisher, is a writer, a consultant, and an avid genealogist.

PAUL JONES



Quebec Premier René Lévesque (right) turns his back on Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau (left) during a federal-provincial conference on the Constitution in September 1980.

MOMENT

Cooking up a Constitution solution

How a secret late-night 'kitchen accord' helped to save Canada's Constitution but alienated Quebec.

The expression says it all. With a defiant shrug, Quebec Premier René Lévesque turns his back on Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau during the second day of an intense meeting in September 1980 between the premiers and the prime minister over Trudeau's plan to patriate the Canadian Constitution.

At the time, the *British North America Act* of 1867 was still the law of the land. Trudeau wanted to replace this legacy British legislation with a Canadian constitution – one that included a charter of rights and freedoms. Most of the premiers, including Lévesque, saw the plan as a threat to provincial jurisdiction. And so the September 1980 conference ended in failure.

In November 1981, Trudeau and the premiers met again in Ottawa in a last-ditch effort to strike a deal. Two days of fierce debate resulted in a stalemate, prompting Trudeau to threaten to hold a national referendum to solve the impasse.

Something had to give – and it did. On November 4, the justice minister of Canada met in secret in a conference centre pantry with the attorneys general of Saskatchewan and Ontario to cook up a compromise. Their so-called "kitchen accord" included Trudeau's charter but also a "notwithstanding clause" that allowed parliament or provincial legislatures to override it.

As for Lévesque, he awoke the next morning in his Quebec hotel room (he was the only premier to refuse accommodation in Ottawa) to find a constitutional deal in place without his input.

In Quebec, the event would become known as the "night of the long knives." To this day, Quebec is the only province not to have signed the Constitution. – *M.C. Reid*

CANADIAN PRESS: CP2730865

Left: Jack Miner releases a Canada goose in Ontario circa 1939–41. Opposite page, clockwise from top left: The Jack Miner museum in Kingsville, Ontario. A Jack Miner band on a goose. Miner, framed by a pair of moose antlers, worked as a professional hunter before devoting his life to conservation. Miner and his wife, Laona Miner (née Wigle), in 1939.

Canada's forgotten conservationist

Jack Miner turned from hunting wildfowl to protecting them and inspired others to do the same. *by Jeff Helsdon*

Every year, when Canadians observe National Wildlife Week during the week of April 10, they are paying tribute to the country's greatest conservationist. The trouble is, most people today have never heard of him.

That is in stark contrast to eighty years ago, when Jack Miner was called Canada's best-known private citizen by press clipping service surveys. The Kingsville, Ontario, resident had continental and worldwide fame, and *Maclean's* magazine ranked him fifth on a list of the greatest living Canadians in 1927.

Born in Westlake, Ohio, on April 10, 1865, John (Jack) Miner went to school for only three months, was unable to read or to write, and remained illiterate until the age of thirty-three. The outdoors became his classroom, something that continued after his family moved to Kingsville, near the shore of Lake Erie, southeast of Windsor, in 1878.

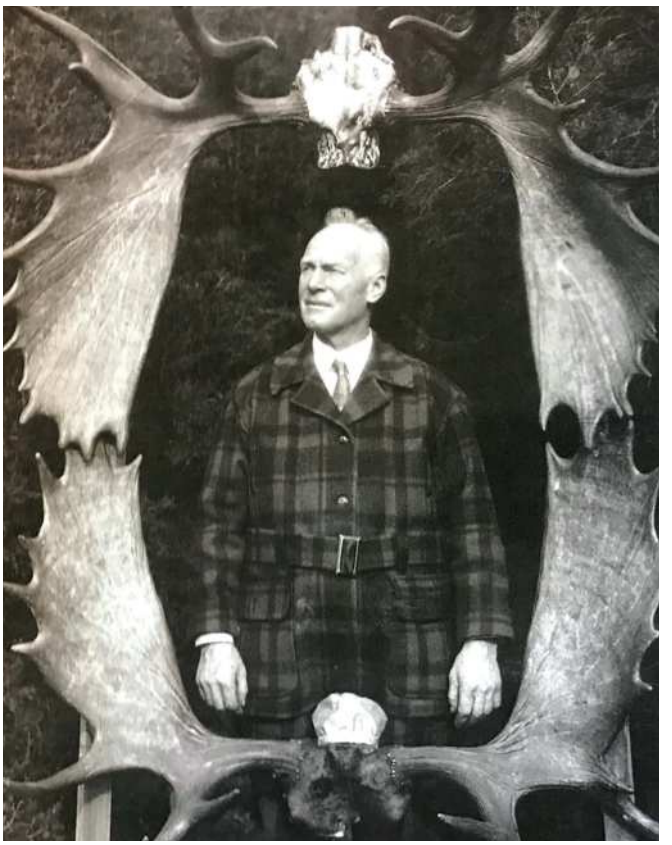
In the 1880s, Miner became a professional trapper and hunter and spent almost a decade in the wilderness plying his trade. During this time, he began to notice a decline in the region's once-abundant wildlife populations.

In 1900, Miner helped to form the Essex County Game Protective Association, one of the first hunter-based conservation groups in the country. Four years later, he built a pond on his farm two kilometres north of Kingsville and launched the Jack Miner Migratory Bird Sanctuary. Releasing several tame Canada geese into the pond, Miner waited for the birds to attract their wild brethren. However, it took another four years before wild geese began gathering at the sanctuary with regularity.

In 1909, Miner began to affix metal leg bands to the waterfowl who visited his refuge. The bands included Miner's home address, along with a request to hunters to return the bands to him. A few years later, Miner started to add a scripture verse on each band.

Although it's debated whether Miner or the American Leon Cole was the first person to band migratory birds, there is no doubt that in 1910 Miner was the first to receive return information regarding his bands. The data on bird migration patterns that he collected through banding became an essential piece of the information that was

PHOTO BY RONNY JAQUES, COURTESY LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES CANADA-431814



considered during the creation of the federal *Migratory Birds Convention Act* in 1917. The Migratory Bird Treaty, signed by Canada and the United States, gave the federal government the ability to protect migratory birds and to implement waterfowl hunting regulations, including seasons and limits.

Needing money to pay for feed grain in his sanctuary, Miner started a lecture tour in 1910. The tour inspired local people and groups to create waterfowl sanctuaries across the continent. Miner then launched a radio show on conservation that developed a continent-wide following. In 1936, at the request of Canadian Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King, Miner delivered the radio address to celebrate King George V's twenty-fifth year as monarch.

Accolades continued to flow. In 1929, Miner became the first Canadian to receive *Outdoor Life* magazine's gold medal "for the greatest achievement in wildlife conservation on the continent." In 1943, King George VI inducted Miner into the Order of the British Empire, "for the greatest achievement in conservation in the British Empire."

Miner was seventy-nine when he died on November 3, 1944. In obituaries, several American newspapers, including the *New York Times,* rated him as the fifth-most-well-known citizen on the continent, following four Americans: industrialist Henry Ford, inventor Thomas Edison, aviator Charles Lindbergh, and war hero and race car driver Eddie Rickenbacker.

In the negotiations between Miner's family and legislators that followed the conservationist's death, it was agreed that his birthday should be remembered as National Wildlife Day. Prime Minister King intervened and had the bill revamped to become the *National Wildlife Week Act*. The bill passed with unanimous support.

Today, the Jack Miner Migratory Bird Foundation still operates the sanctuary as well as a museum on his original farm near Kingsville.

TOP LEFT, TOP RIGHT AND LOWER RIGHT: COURTESY OF JEFF HEISDON/JACK MINER MIGRATORY BIRD FOUNDATION. LOWER LEFT: TORONTO PUBLIC LIBRARY

ROYAL TYRRELL MUSEUM OF PALEONTOLOGY

Love me tender?

Competition for mates was a violent affair for prehistoric predators, say Alberta dinosaur experts.

British rock band Def Leppard likely didn't have thunder lizards in mind when its members wrote the 1988 chart-topper "Love Bites."

But *Tyrannosaurus rex* probably did bite when it came to the mating game, as did other apex dinosaur predators, according to a new study by Alberta paleontologists on facial scarring found on fossilized tyrannosaurids.

The study, titled "Intraspecific facial bite marks in tyrannosaurids provide insight into sexual maturity and evolution of bird-like intersexual display," was written by Caleb Brown and François Therrien, curators at the Royal Tyrrell Museum in Drumheller, Alberta, and Philip Currie, a paleontologist at the University of Alberta. It was published recently in the scientific journal *Paleobiology*.

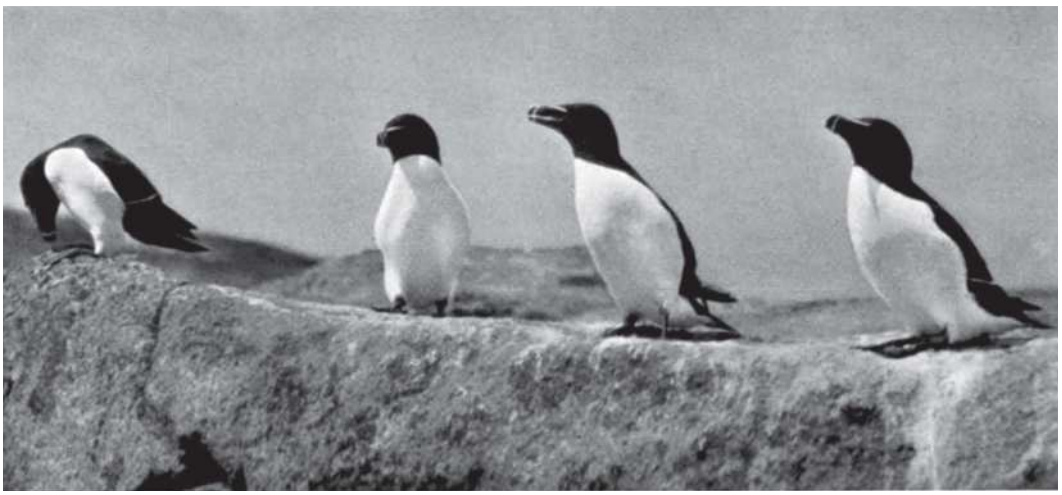
Aggressive behaviour is common in the animal kingdom when it comes to competition for mates. However, paleontologists were unsure whether the same type of behaviour was displayed by dinosaurs – and, if so, by which ones?

For the study, the team examined 528 fossilized skull bones of *albertosaurus, gorgosaurus,* and *daspletosaurus,* cousins of the *T. Rex* that lived millions of years ago in western North America. The researchers recorded a total of 324 scars, mostly on the upper and lower jawbones, with many showing signs of advanced healing – a sign that the wounds were "repeated and non-lethal." Around sixty per cent of the fossils showed signs of facial scarring. The team also found that facial scarring generally appeared around the onset of sexual maturity – when the fearsome carnivores had reached about half their adult size.

Other explanations for the scarring include disputes over territory or resources, fights to establish dominance, and overly frisky courtship rituals.

Interestingly, facial scarring is generally absent in small theropods such as *dromaeosaurs* (think the velociraptors of *Jurassic Park* fame) and other groups closely related to birds.

"It is possible that these smaller dinosaurs may have shifted their behaviour from physical aggression to attract mates to a more bird-like, visual-display-oriented selection, resulting from the evolution of complex feathers," the museum said in a news release. – *M.C. Reid*



American naturalist John Ripley Forbes photographed a host of seabirds during his 1937 voyage to Labrador, including, clockwise from top left, razor-billed auks, an Atlantic puffin guarding an egg, and a young glaucous gull.

FROM THE ARCHIVES

Winging it

'Interest and thrills' abounded during a 1937 voyage in search of seabirds along the Labrador coast.

In 1937, American naturalist John Ripley Forbes spent several weeks exploring coastal Labrador in search of seabirds.

His voyage aboard the steamship *Gertrude L. Thebaud*, captained by American explorer and navy veteran Donald B. MacMillan, resulted in "Sea Birds of Labrador," an article published in the June 1942 issue of *The Beaver*.

During the voyage, Forbes and company sailed as far north as the Arctic Circle, to the region around Cumberland Sound, but otherwise focused on the coast of Labrador.

Near the Strait of Belle Isle, Forbes and his shipmates delighted in seeing "great numbers" of Atlantic puffins, whose short, unsteady flights often ended with an ungainly splash into the cool Atlantic Ocean. "We regret not being able to spend more time with this comical looking bird, a true Mr. Punch of the bird kingdom," Forbes wrote.

As cute as the puffins were, Forbes cautioned against getting too close to the birds. "As the visitor to the puffin's nest will testify, the [bird's] bill is also used to inflict serious wounds when the bird is cornered."

Forbes was also impressed by the gannets he encountered, dubbing them "magnificent ocean dwellers." Among the many white-feathered adults were smaller "dusky coloured" young, who spent hours on end "flying about looking for food." Other birds spotted by Forbes included razor-billed auks, white-winged scoters, black guillemots, and eider ducks.

The voyage – "full of interest and thrills," wrote Forbes – lasted more than two months, during which time the ship travelled more than 9,600 kilometres before returning to port in Gloucester, Massachusetts. – *M.C. Reid*

THE BEAVER JUNE 1942

Virtual talking circles keep Métis Michif alive

As the generation of fluent speakers ages, new students log in to learn.

by Blair McBride

A small group in the municipality of St. Albert, northeast of Edmonton, is working to ensure Métis Michif becomes a language of the future and not a mere echo of the past.

Founded in 1861 as a Métis community, St. Albert is today the base of the Michif Cultural Connections group that celebrates Métis culture through beading, jigging, and moccasin making and that offers classes in Michif.

The language and its dialects have historically been spoken by Métis peoples across Western Canada. Michif combines Plains Cree grammar with a mixture of French and Cree vocabulary.

Since 2017, Michif Cultural Connections has been holding language classes for dozens of students who gather at the historic Juneau House. Built in 1890, it's St. Albert's oldest existing residence – but classes shifted online in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Joshua Morin, the group's office manager, has been leading the weekly ninety-minute courses for just over two years. His grandmother Thelma Chalifoux founded Michif Cultural Connections in 2004, following her retirement from the Senate of Canada, where she served as the first Métis woman senator.

Morin speaks a dialect known as "Southern Michif" that is used in Métis communities along the Red River in Manitoba, as well as in other parts of Manitoba and in Saskatchewan. The beginner-level classes focus on pronunciation, simple nouns and verbs, and basic conversation. A recent class included twenty-seven students from around North America.

"They're classes, but I call them virtual talking circles," Morin said. "I don't approach them like a colonial class. I can't give students a test and then fail them. This is a language of the land; it was a language taken from us [in residential schools]. The circle is inclusive, and non-Métis people can take the class."

For the online lessons, Morin uses PowerPoint slides based on teaching resources from the National Centre for Collaboration in Indigenous Education and the non-profit Prairies to Woodlands Indigenous Language Revitalization Circle (P2WILRC). Students can also access Michif resources, like the P2WILRC's online "Michif Talking Dictionary (Li liivr di Moo aañ Michif)" and the Heritage Michif To Go app from

ILLUSTRATION BY AARON MCKAY

the Gabriel Dumont Institute.

By the time one of the eight-week courses wraps up, students are expected to be able to introduce themselves in Michif, to ask basic questions, and to identify objects.

Even though he's Métis, Morin was raised in an environment that was mostly English-speaking. Seeking out Michif was a step toward reconnecting with his identity.

"My grandmother collected a lot of Michif books. She had one of the first Michif dictionaries, *Turtle Mountain Chippewa Cree*. It was my first look into the language," Morin said.

He began learning to speak Michif when he met lifelong speaker Graham Andrews through Michif Cultural Connections. Andrews learned Michif from his aunts and grandmother while growing up in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan.

"I refuse to call myself a teacher," said Andrews, who sometimes helps out with Morin's classes. "As Métis people, we share. It just so happens that I get these opportunities to share."

While the virtual sessions have connected students as far away as North Dakota and Nova Scotia, the format has brought its own difficulties.

"[Before COVID] everyone was in a circle, and you could see everyone's faces in person. Getting used to talking to people on a screen was very challenging. But we got through it, and everyone was really appreciative," Morin said.

Candice Behrendt, a Winnipeg Métis student, began joining the virtual classes along with her two daughters about eighteen months ago. "My goal is for [them] to learn Michif and be more fluent than I am, and hopefully their descendants will be even more fluent," she said.

At the start of the course, Behrendt said she was at a "very basic" level and learned what she could from Michif dictionaries.

"Trying to pronounce the words using an app or dictionary is quite difficult. It's nothing like having somebody talk to you," she said. "Now I can hold a basic conversation. The things we learn are relevant to our cultural values, like inviting people in for tea, or saying 'this is my grandmother,' or 'this is my sister,' or 'it's cold outside today.'"

There is urgency to the efforts of those learning Michif. Almost all fluent speakers of the language are elderly, and the window in which to benefit from their advice and experience is closing.

According to a 2016 Statistics Canada census on Indigenous languages, less than two per cent of the total Métis population in Canada could then speak an Indigenous language. Of that number (a little less than ten thousand people), almost three quarters spoke either Cree or Dene, and just over a thousand could speak Michif.

Heather Souter, a Métis linguist and Michif teacher, did not grow up speaking the language but has spent the past twenty years honing her proficiency. Today she is a sessional lecturer of two Michif classes at the University of Manitoba and also operates P2WILRC.

Above: *Métis hunting buffalo in the Summer 1822*, by the nineteenth-century artist Peter Rindisbacher.

Left: Joshua Morin, office manager of Michif Cultural Connections in St. Albert, Alberta, has been leading online Michif language courses for more than two years.

Souter, who rates her own language procifiency at "mid-level intermediate," said it will take decades of dedicated effort to grow the number of Michif speakers to the point of sustainability.

"People want change now, but to make our languages vital again – when we already have two, or three, or four generations without their language – we can't expect a book, or ten years [of language-learning initiatives] to get our language back," she said. "It's faster to lose something than to regain it. It's going to take thirty years of concentrated effort to bring back any kind of reasonable number of proficient adult speakers."

To get there will require countless hours of personal study and practice by Michif learners. It will also require the creation of opportunities for Michif to be regularly spoken.

"I've seen people able to use the language when working for Parks Canada at the Riel House National Historic Site," Souter said. "[But] the bottom line is, without creating opportunities outside of institutions for people to use Michif, and most importantly families, it's really hard for people."

Back in St. Albert, Morin agrees that there is still much more work to be done. But he's also encouraged by the momentum that Michif Cultural Connections has helped to create towards revitalizing the language.

"I hope that with the next generation there won't be a need for beginner classes," Morin said. "There can be intermediate classes, because they'll be learning beginner [level] at home. That's our goal."

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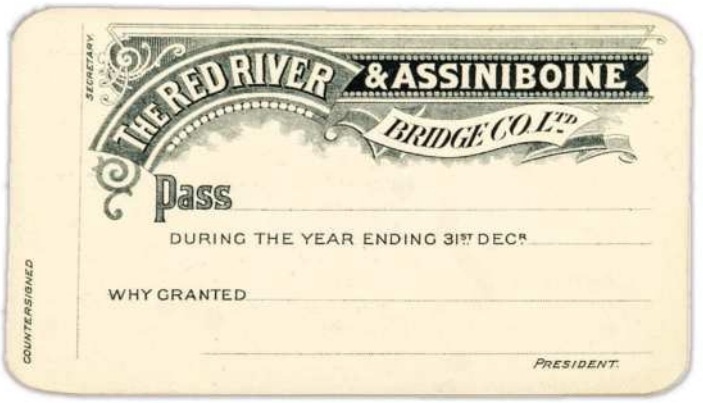

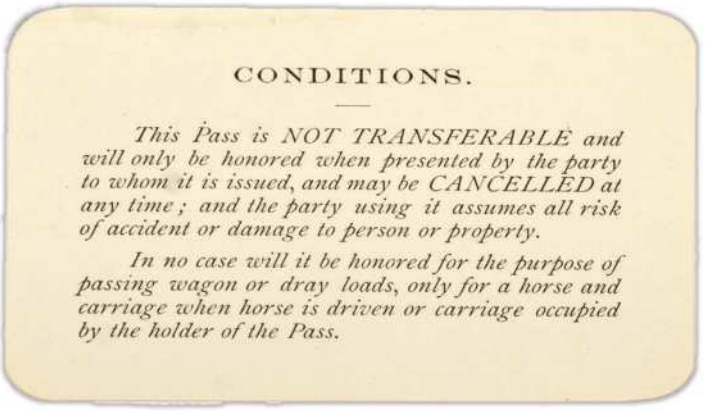

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Toll bridge passes and tokens

Tales and Treasures from the rich legacy of the Hudson's Bay Company

Prior to 1891, when a first bridge was completed, the only transportation option between Winnipeg and St. Boniface, Manitoba, had been by ferry across the Red River. But, with a growing population in the Norwood area of St. Boniface, the Norwood Improvement Company, owned largely by directors of the Canadian Pacific Railway, commissioned the construction of the original Norwood Bridge.

A toll keeper on the Winnipeg side collected tolls from all who wished to cross, with the exception of people who owned property in Norwood. Paper passes and aluminum tokens — including these 1898 tokens priced at two cents each — were issued by the Red River and Assiniboine Bridge Company for pedestrians as well as for transit by horse and carriage.

Revenues for the toll bridge were reportedly around twenty-five dollars per week in the early days, but with increasing traffic this grew to around fifty dollars per day. The tolls ceased in 1909, after St. Boniface purchased the bridge. The HBC merchandise department donated these tokens and passes to the original HBC Museum Collection in 1922, and St. Boniface was amalgamated with Winnipeg in 1972.

— Amelia Fay, curator of the HBC Collection at the Manitoba Museum

ARTIFACTS FROM THE MANITOBA MUSEUM (HBC 1323) / PHOTO BY ANDREW WORKMAN

HUDSON'S BAY

The Beaver magazine was originally founded as a Hudson's Bay Company publication in 1920. To read stories from past issues, go to **CanadasHistoryArchive.ca**. To explore the history of the Hudson's Bay Company, go to **hbcheritage.ca**, or follow HBC's Twitter and Instagram feeds at **@HBCHeritage.**

SHEAR STYLE

From press and curls to Afros and dreadlocks, Black hairstyling has undergone many twists and turns through the decades.

by Cheryl Thompson

In my 2019 book *Beauty in a Box: Detangling the Roots of Canada's Black Beauty Culture*, I argue that Canada's Black beauty culture industry has been, and continues to be, mostly a proxy for American products, services, and beauty imagery. Today, however, things are changing.

There are Black-owned beauty supply stores that offer an inventory of hair weaves and styling products. There are also hairstylists like Toronto-based Janet Jackson, an internationally known celebrity beauty expert who, in 2021, appeared with me and six other Black Canadian women in the #MyHairMyStory digital campaign for a product line for Afro-textured hair created by Black scientists, stylists, and dermatologists. These changes would have been unimaginable in 1962, when Kemeel Azan opened his first salon, Azan's Beauty World, on Spadina Avenue in downtown Toronto.

A client at Azan's Beauty World in Toronto shows off her newly coiffed beehive hairdo in 1969.

Azan, who was born in Jamaica, was drawn to Black women's hair care when he came to Canada in the 1950s and noticed that many Black Caribbean women who worked as domestics had very few hair care options. At one point Azan had four salons, but eventually Beauty World was consolidated into one location on Davenport Road, which is still in business today, with a clientele that includes actress and filmmaker Tonya Lee Williams (a client since she was nine years old) and Toronto Centre MP and former journalist Marci Ien.

By 1970 there were twelve Black hair salons, including Azan's, that stretched across Toronto. Before this, Black hairstylists had operated in what's known as a kitchen and hideaway industry, where Black women did each other's hair in non-commercial spaces, such as over their kitchen sinks, or in salons operated out of women's apartments or basements. Today, kitchen and hideaway hair care still exists across Canada, especially in smaller cities and towns where Black hairstylists rely on word-of-mouth promotion.

The story of Black hairstyling is intimately

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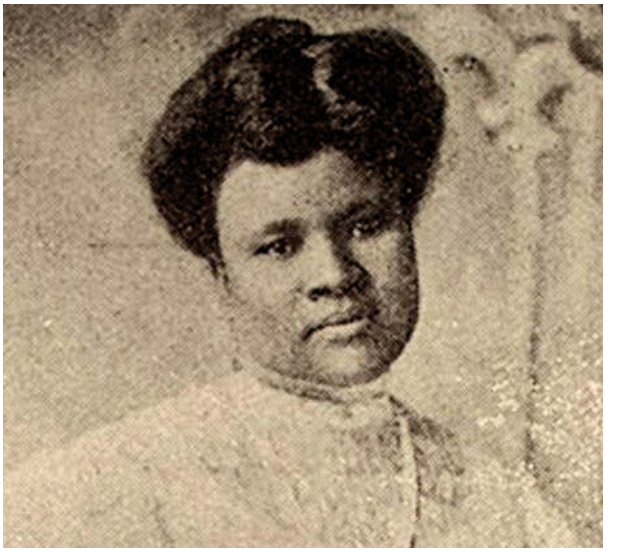
Canadian singer Measha Brueggergosman wears her hair in an Afro for an engagement in New York in 2007.



Above left: American-born entertainer Josephine Baker, who became a sensation when she arrived in Paris in the 1920s, wears a short hairstyle typical of the flapper era. Baker later became a spy for the French Resistance during the Second World War. Top right: Hair care entrepreneur Madam C. J. Walker, circa 1890s. Above right: Viola Desmond in her hair salon in Halifax, circa 1938.

tied to four definitive moments. First, Madam C.J. Walker, an African American hair mogul, developed a shampoo, press, and curl method of hair care in the 1910s that was replicated by many, including African Nova Scotian Viola Desmond. Second, African American celebrities popularized the pageboy hairstyle and its numerous variations in the 1940s and 1950s. Third, the 1960s civil rights era made a liberatory call for Black people to embrace their natural hair. Finally, Caribbean culture in the 1970s helped dreadlocks enter the mainstream, while product shops in the 1980s and 1990s popularized chemical straightening and hair weaving.

Born Sarah Breedlove in Louisiana in 1867, Madam C.J. Walker was the first woman in America to become a self-made millionaire, according to the *Guinness Book of World Records*. In the 1910s, she incorporated the Madam C.J. Walker Manufacturing Company to produce her skin and hair products, and she opened the Madam C.J. Walker School of Beauty Culture to teach others her hair care techniques. Both of these were headquartered in Indianapolis, Indiana. Her product line included a hair grower, a glossine (a type of pomade), a vegetable shampoo, a tetter salve (an anti-dandruff treatment), and a temple salve (for the relief of tension headaches). Her "Walker system" of hair care included the use of products and a shampoo, press, and curl method of straightening hair, which involved the use of light oil and a wide-toothed steel comb heated on a stove to straighten the hair. African American Annie Turnbo Malone preceded Walker in developing a product for Afro-textured hair, which she called "Wonderful Hair Grower," in the 1900s. Walker modified Malone's techniques and selling strategy — which involved a door-to-door pyramid-type method likely borrowed from the California Perfume Company (later known as Avon) — to grow her business.

In Halifax, a teenaged Viola Desmond read about Walker's success and was inspired to follow in her footsteps. She studied at the Madam C.J. Walker Beauty School, earned a diploma from another trailblazing African American entrepreneur, Madam Sara Spencer Washington, at her Apex College of Beauty Culture and Hairdressing in Atlantic

LEFT: ALAMY C1FFA3. TOP RIGHT: CANADIAN PRESS/ EVERETT COLLECTION. BOTTOM RIGHT: WANDA ROBSON AND VIOLA DESMOND COLLECTION. 16-87-30227. BEATON INSTITUTE, CAPE BRETON UNIVERSITY

Montreal tap dancer Ethel Bruneau sports a pixie haircut as she performs with partner Nathan Alonzo circa 1953.

MONTREAL GAZETTE/COURTESY ETHEL BRUNEAU

City, New Jersey, and further trained in New York. This education allowed Desmond to operate her own beauty salon, Vi's Studio of Beauty Culture, on Gottingen Street in the North End of Halifax's downtown. Like her African American counterparts, Desmond specialized in selling hair care products and performing press and curls, and she also sold chignons, hairpieces, and wigs. The popularity of the press and curl, also referred to as thermal straightening because of the use of a hot comb, was largely a result of the socio-cultural conditions under Jim Crow segregation that

American movie star and nightclub singer Lena Horne wears a soft bob, a haircut that was popular in the 1950s.

made Black women — and men — feel that they needed to appear neat and proper in public to avoid undue attention from whites.

Eventually, Desmond opened the Desmond School of Beauty Culture, where she taught Black women from across Canada the techniques of hair straightening — until the events of 1946, when she refused to give up her seat in the whites-only section of the Roseland movie theatre in New Glasgow, Nova Scotia. She was arrested, jailed overnight, convicted of an obscure tax offence based on the cost of her movie ticket, and fined — an experience that led to her shutting down her businesses.

Following her ordeal, when Desmond appeared on the front page of the December 1946 issue of the *Clarion* — the African Nova Scotian newspaper founded in New Glasgow by journalist and civil rights activist Carrie M. Best — she wore her hair in a pageboy style. This style, which involved straightening the hair with the use of a hot comb and then curling it under at the ends with bangs at the front, was most popular among middle-class Black women during the 1940s and 1950s. The hairstyle was inspired by the onscreen success of Hollywood stars Dorothy Dandridge and Lena Horne, both of whom increased their public profile by appearing in stories in African American magazines like *Ebony* and *Jet*. Variations on the pageboy hairstyle included cluster curls, in which the hair was curled in the front, and chignons, in which the hair was pinned into a knot at the back of the head. Feather curls, which involved layering the hair, were also popular during this period. As women desired these glamorous hairstyles, the market for hair attachments, then known as falsies, took off.

The politics of respectability during the Jim Crow era of segregation meant that the Black hair care industry often took its cues from the dominant culture's standards of beauty. The race politics of the 1940s ultimately motivated many Black women to wear straightened hairstyles like the pageboy. Thus, in the 1950s, Black women continued to wear the pageboy and its variations, but some began to wear their hair short in a pixie or bob, styles popularized by actresses Leslie Caron and Audrey Hepburn, because those styles also came to be viewed as beautiful. Black women continued to take their beauty cues from the dominant culture. However, during the civil rights movement of the 1960s, Black hairstyling profoundly changed.

Between 1964 and 1966, a new African-identified aesthetic, known as the Afro, became the hairstyle of choice for Black people around the world. The rise in the United States of the Black Panther Party, a Black political organization founded by Huey Newton and Bobby Seale, and the philosophy of other activists such as the Trinidad-born Stokely Carmichael, influenced a whole generation of Black people to reclaim African aesthetics as part of their demand for civil rights. This movement became known as "Black is Beautiful."

In the television drama series *East Side, West Side*, which aired in the United States on CBS from 1963 to 1964, actor Cicely Tyson helped to spearhead the movement when she wore a short, cropped Afro in her role as Jane Foster, the secretary in a social welfare office in New York City. Afros of different shapes and sizes were given names. The petite was a small, round Afro; the ebonette was slightly larger and more oval in shape; the princess was a large, round Afro; the first lady was a medium-sized, round Afro; the elegante was a short-cut Afro; and the Afrique was a coiffed Afro that was curved and elongated at the front.

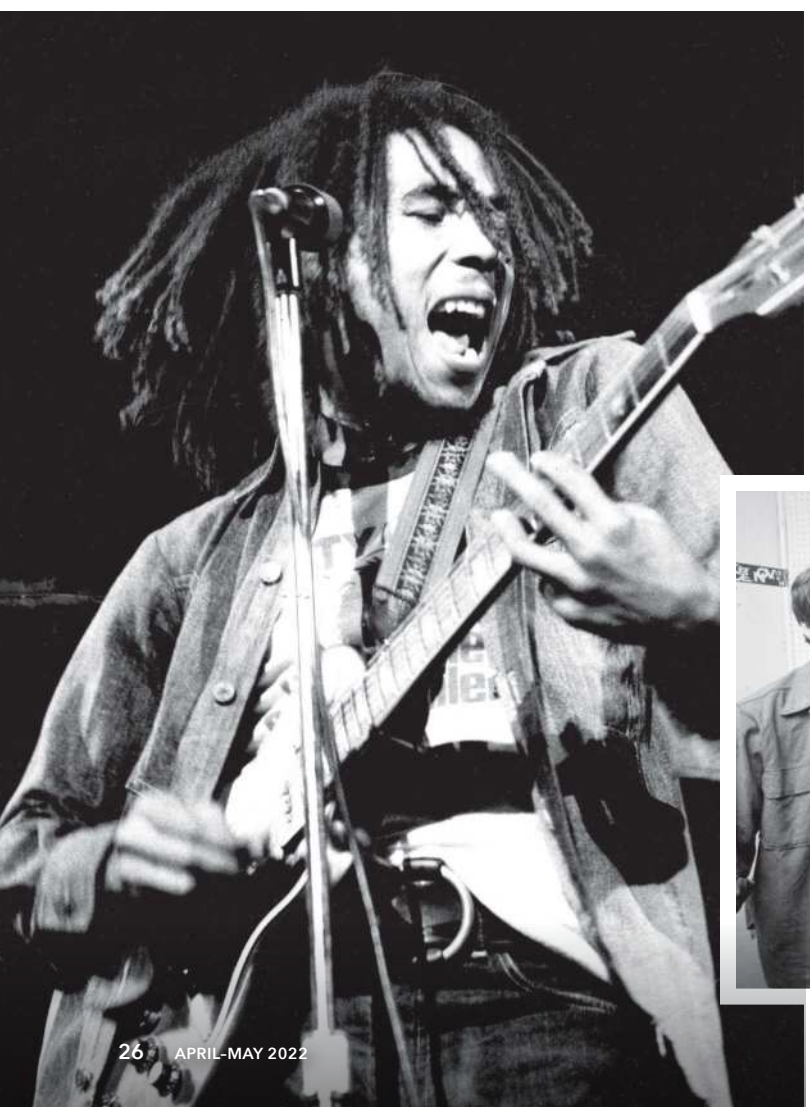
Tyson also wore cornrows, a traditional African hairstyle created by tightly braiding hair into rows. Cornrows had also been worn by enslaved persons in the United States and the Caribbean, where elaborate hairstyles replicated the plantation grounds, acting as a guide to help people escape. Following the emancipation of enslaved African Americans at the end of the U.S. Civil War, the hairstyle was deemed backwards — a reminder of a past of enslavement. As such it went out of style until Tyson brought it back into the mainstream as a fashionable hairdo. When African American singers like James Brown, who sang the 1968 hit "Say it Loud — I'm Black and I'm Proud," adopted the Afro, they also helped to popularize the hairstyle. By the end of the 1970s, however, with the emergence of multiple chemical hair straightening products and the rise of dreadlocks, a natural aesthetic associated with Jamaicans, the Afro craze came to an end.

In 1970, Nova Scotia-born Beverly Mascoll founded Mascoll Beauty Supply Ltd. in Toronto's Bathurst and Bloor neighbourhood — an area euphemistically known as "Blackhurst" due to the numerous Black-owned

ALAMY BXPWST

Canadian singer Salome Bey wears a braided hairstyle created by Azan's Beauty World salon in 1975

TORONTO STAR/ TSPA_0032698F



Top: Toronto civil rights lawyer Charles Roach, right, stands beside his client Carmen Hyde while fighting her deportation order in 1978. Both wear Afros, often symbols of Black empowerment. Hyde came to Canada on a federal program to import domestic workers from the Caribbean, which required her to declare that she had no dependent children. In fact, her wages supported her four children in Jamaica.

Left: Reggae musician Bob Marley plays in Toronto on June 8, 1975. Marley popularized dreadlocks beyond the Caribbean.

Below: Members of the American Deserters Committee, formed in Montreal in 1970 to oppose the Vietnam War. The man on the right has an Afro, as did many Black activists.

TOP: THE TORONTO STAR ARCHIVES. LEFT: BARRIE DAVIS / THE GLOBE AND MAIL. BOTTOM: LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES CANADA/ PA-153762

Above left: Toronto reggae music producer Rupert Ojiji Harvey wears dreadlocks at his mixing board in 1983. Above right: Governor General Michaëlle Jean displays her natural curls as she reads the Throne Speech on Parliament Hill in Ottawa on March 3, 2010.

businesses that lined Bathurst Street in the 1970s. Mascoll's Beauty Supply revolutionized the sale of Black beauty products in Canada. As a teenager in the 1990s, I frequently shopped there and marvelled at the store's shelves that were lined with shampoos, conditioners, wigs, and wiglets, as well as chemical hair straighteners, known as relaxers because they relax tightly coiled hair.

Since the nineteenth century, Black entrepreneurs had experimented with chemical concoctions for their hair. African American Garrett Augustus Morgan invented a relaxer in 1909, but the first person to commercialize a chemical relaxer was Mexican-born José Baraquiel Calva. He invented a product called Lustrasilk and offered it for sale at licensed hair salons in 1948. In the late 1950s, George E. Johnson's Ultra Wave became the first relaxer that could be applied at home. By the 1980s, chemical relaxers usurped the shampoo, press, and curl — which until then had still been popular in hair salons — as the dominant method of hair straightening. In the 1980s, the emergent fashion- and beauty-magazine culture made straightened hair the dominant aesthetic. From coast to coast, Black Canadians achieved success as distributors and retailers of these chemical products. Toronto had Mascoll Beauty Supply Ltd. In Calgary, Maurice and Ann Walters owned and operated the Plaza Drug Store (the first Black-owned drugstore in Western Canada). Mainstream drugstores also began to sell Black beauty products.

In the 1980s, Black hairstyles ranged from chemically straightened blowouts to the Jheri curl, worn by singer Michael Jackson on the cover of his chart-topping 1982 album *Thriller*. This style required a chemical process to start, followed by the daily, abundant use of curl-activator sprays, oils, and moisturizers to achieve ringlet-like curls. As the Black beauty product industry grew exponentially because of chemical hair-straightening products, dreadlocks also became more popular for those who sought a natural alternative. Before reggae artist Bob Marley appeared on the cover of *Rolling Stone* in 1976, most people outside of Jamaica had never seen dreadlocks. By the 1990s, dreadlocks were frequently referred to as locs, as more Black professionals adopted the hairstyle. For some people locs carried the same socio-political meaning as the 1960s Afro, but for many the hairstyle was part of a healthy lifestyle that included a move away from harsh chemicals and hot combs. In Toronto, hairstylists specializing in the care and treatment of locs, known as locticians, sprouted up across the city. One of them was Strictly Roots, where I started my locs in 2007 before the owner, Ruth Smith, relocated the business to Ghana.

Throughout the 1990s, hair weaves, which involve adding synthetic or real hair to one's own hair, became an alternative hairstyle to relaxers and locs. Besides being alternatives to chemical straightening, weaves serve as a protective cover for natural hair, allowing women to wear straight-haired dos like feather curls and chignons without using a relaxer. Another popular type of weave is a lace-front wig. This type of wig can be worn over short hair or over long hair braided into cornrows. The wig is either sewn on to the braided hair beneath it or fastened to a cap that is glued with an adhesive to the scalp.

Today, Black hairstyling is whatever people want it to be — natural or straightened, twisted or cornrowed. From Vancouver to Halifax, brick-and-mortar shops and kitchen and hideaway businesses are keeping Black hair traditions alive. What's needed, however, is institutional support from cosmetology schools — where, in 2022, there is still no mandatory Black hair training for stylists — and from provincial licensing bodies, whose exams include very little about textured hair.

The history of Black hair reveals centuries of diverse hairstyles. However, there remains a lack of knowledge about it among the general population in Canada. My hope for the future is that Black hair will become widely accepted and appreciated for its varied lengths and textures — because Black hair is beautiful.

LEFT: FROM THE TORONTO STAR ARCHIVES. RIGHT: CANADIAN PRESS CP2631959

HAIR IN THE PRESS

by Jo McCutcheon

From the mid-eighteenth century onward, advice has abounded in newspapers, magazines, and catalogues on the latest hairstyles, accessories, fashions, and fads in the trend-setting cities of Paris, London, and New York. In Canada, magazines like *Chatelaine* have linked local styles to beloved characters and famous movie stars. Throughout the twentieth century there were fantastic episodes of big hair, a lot of fake hair, and breathless hype about electric curling implements and other hair-styling gadgets. Here are a few examples.

THE BOB

As early as 1915, popular media was introducing Canadian women to the controversial bob cut, which eschewed the traditional femininity of long hair for the perceived boyishness of short locks. "New York women have succeeded in getting a genuine novelty in hairdressing, though it must be added there are still a few who haven't accepted it," the *Winnipeg Free Press* reported in May 1915. "The newest thing for the matinee-goer is clipped hair, clipped over the ears if the wearer is a bit timid, or clipped all the way like a baby boy's if she means to go the whole figure."

The comic strip character Buster Brown was sometimes cited as an inspiration for this style, which persisted into the 1930s. But some people didn't find the look amusing. "The French courts have been called upon to decide whether hair bobbing, like marriage, in the case of a young girl requires the consent of her parents," the *Lethbridge Herald* reported in a wire story from Dijon, France, in October 1925. "A girl of 30 recently went to a hairdresser and had her long locks shorn. Her father was irate and brought suit for damages against the barber. The barber syndicate of Dijon has joined in the defense of the suit."

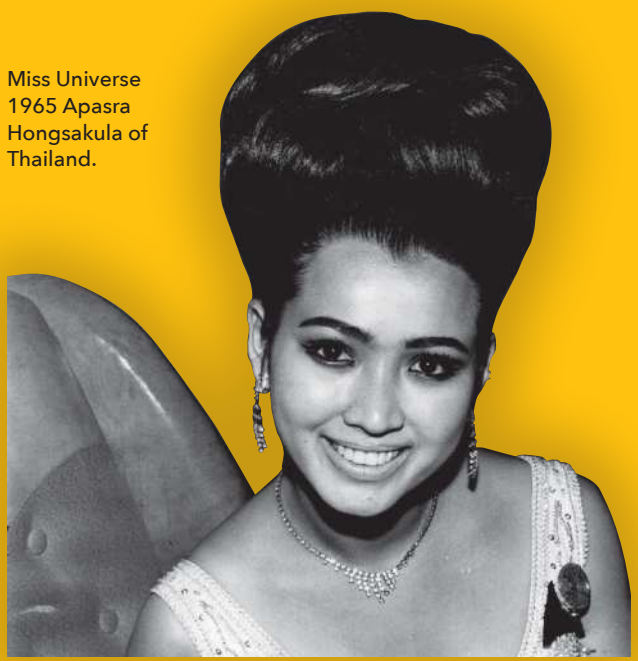
ALAMY 2ABF1PH

Canadian actress Fifi D'Orsay in the 1934 film *Wonder Bar.*

THE BOUFFANT

By the 1950s, the bouffant hairstyle came into vogue. However, in a July 1956 *Winnipeg Free Press* article titled "Will Windy Winnipeg Defeat New Hair Style?" advice and fashion columnist Ruth Thorvaldson declared her concern for the fate of the bouffant: "Local hairstylists are willing to set customers' hair according to the new trend, but in a windy city like Winnipeg some doubt if it will become popular beyond the experimental stage. Women accustomed to easily groomed, short-cropped hairstyles are not likely to give in to the harder-to-manage, smoother hairdo, say the stylists." By the winter of 1963, one *Free Press* advice column opined that Winnipeg women should give up the bouffant in favour of a style that was "more conducive to hat wearing. Up to now, our women have been more or less babushka-inclined."

Canadian actress Barbara Parkins, circa 1964-69.



Miss Universe 1965 Apasra Hongsakula of Thailand.

THE BEEHIVE

Perhaps to the dismay of that advice columnist, the next trend was no more conducive to hat wearing than the bouffant had been. The beehive, which involved piling hair high on top of the head, was either a stylish fashion statement or an annoying obstruction, depending on one's point of view. In an October 1959 article in the *Winnipeg Free Press* entitled "Trouble at the Theatre: Beware of the Beehives," writer Eugenia Sheppard described one patron wearing a beehive "trussed up, goodness knows how, into a 12-inch-high pile on top of her head." In 1962, a patron at the city's Rainbow Theatre complained: "When the show began, my neck started to ache from craning around this grotesque beehive.... When imprisoned behind a soaring beehive hairdo, one has the choice of either leaving or shutting one's eyes and enjoying the music."

FLAT HAIR

As the 1960s wore on, elaborate updos gave way to the long, straight hair of hippies and flower children. But, though it may have seemed more natural, this look also required work – and technological help. "If you spot your teen-age daughter with the electric iron plugged in but nothing in sight that needs obvious pressing don't be alarmed. She's just going to 'iron her hair straight,' the latest fad among the younger female set," *Winnipeg Free Press* columnist Gene Telpner noted in December 1964. "So, the hair situation has now come full circle, from beehive bouffant to flat heads made even flatter by application of irons. Some of the girls have even dug out old curling irons of their mothers but are using them for straightening purposes. Even a few teen-age boys are pressing the front of their hair in sort of a kooky bang arrangement. Tough to be a parent these days."

Canadian musician Joni Mitchell in 1968.

TOP RIGHT: ALAMY HD5D9M. CENTRE LEFT: THE TORONTO STAR ARCHIVES/TSPA_0020522F. BOTTOM RIGHT: JACK ROBINSON/GETTY IMAGES

THE RAILRODDER

Silent-film star Buster Keaton drove the last spike in his movie career with a tragicomic cross-Canada journey.

by Gare Joyce

IT COULD HAVE BEEN CANADA'S CENTENNIAL YEAR, 1967. IT COULD HAVE been '68 or maybe '69 when I first saw it. I know it was on the big screen of a theatre on Danforth Avenue in Toronto. It would have been a Saturday matinee, but I'm not sure for which film my friends and I, a pack of grade-school brats, had grabbed tickets — was it *Bonnie and Clyde*, *In the Heat of the Night*, or maybe a third or fourth run of *The Great Escape*? As ever, my friends and I would have been impatient for the curtain to be raised and for the main feature to begin, all the more impatient when a short film was screened while stragglers took their velvet seats.

The short in question opened with a shot of the face of Big Ben and the sound of a train rolling out of a station. Then the credits appeared: The National Film Board of Canada Presents: Buster Keaton in *The Railrodder*. The camera pulled back to show a bridge over the River Thames. It was puzzling — a Canadian film, in England, with a title and sound that suggested a train, yet not one in sight.

After the establishing shot, a tired-looking old man in a straw hat and a loud red vest appeared onscreen, sitting with his back to a London street scene, reading the *Sunday Times*. From his point of view, we saw a full-page ad in the paper, consisting of three words: SEE CANADA NOW. And then, as if in the old man's imagination, came a montage of action clips — lumberjacks felling trees, buffalo stampeding, moose roaming, Indigenous people dancing around a fire in a traditional ceremony, Mounties in full dress riding in formation. Then at a distance we saw the man jump off a bridge into the Thames and for a moment vanish, unexplained, seemingly inexplicable.

It's been more than five decades since that day, and I've forgotten many of the details, but what I do remember, vividly, is my reaction to that short film. And my reaction was: What the heck is this?

Founded in 1939, the National Film Board (NFB) has produced thousands of short films. NFB shorts have won eleven Oscars in the live-action, documentary, and animation categories. *The Railrodder*, the short film that I watched that day long ago, did not win an Oscar, nor was it one of the dozens of NFB shorts to be nominated for an Academy Award, yet it stands in a class of its own in the board's vast library.

Ambitious and yet pretension-free, *The Railrodder* is Canada's link to one of the titans of the silent-film era, Buster Keaton. In fact, the film isn't simply a vehicle for Keaton but a loving tribute and homage all at once — with a contract that, after some negotiation, secured his services for the princely sum of $5,000 and a duck.

Buster Keaton is universally regarded as one of the three comic giants of the silent-film era, alongside Charlie Chaplin and Harold Lloyd. Keaton was the son of vaudeville entertainers who performed with the legendary escape artist Harry Houdini — his parents were on tour in the autumn of 1895 when his mother went into labour in Piqua, Kansas. Before the young Keaton could walk, he worked his way into the family's act — he crawled out of a suitcase that doubled as a crib and

DAVID DE VOLPI

Buster Keaton peers out of the railway speeder in which he plans to cross Canada at the beginning of the film *The Railrodder*.

Buster Keaton, playing Johnnie Gray, grips a railway tie as he rides on the front of a train in his 1927 movie *The General*.

made his way onto the stage in the middle of a show.

Keaton broke into the film game as a bit player in Roscoe (Fatty) Arbuckle movies but managed to steal scenes from the star, not by hamming it up but rather by doing the exact opposite. Keaton was the deadest of deadpan comics — no matter how circumstances around him spun out of control, Keaton's expression never seemed to change, staying in the default mode of mournful resignation and existential dread. He earned the nickname the Great Stone Face. Influential film critic Roger Ebert explained: "[Keaton] kept his composure in the centre of chaos. Other silent actors might mug to get a point across, but Keaton remained observant and collected. That's one reason his best movies have aged better than those of his rival, Charlie Chaplin. He seems like a modern visitor to the world of the silent clowns." Other Keaton trademarks included physical comedy and breathtakingly terrifying stunts of his own design. In the most famous of them, a scene in *Steamboat Bill, Jr.*, Keaton stood stock still on his mark, stroking his chin, while the facade of a two-story house fell on him, or at least around him — he was spared certain death only because a tall window frame on the top floor passed over his body.

A movie poster for Buster Keaton's 1927 silent film *The General*.

The American Film Institute (AFI) ranked Keaton as number twenty-one on its list of the greatest American male movie stars of all time, and Keaton's greatest film, *The General*, was number eighteen on the AFI's 2007 ranking of the greatest American movies of all time.

A Civil War action-comedy, epic in scale, with an enormous budget of $750,000 and five hundred extras for battle scenes, *The General* was the story of Johnnie Gray, a young locomotive engineer, whose love is divided between his fiancée and his train, the eponymous *General*. To win the girl's affection, he tries to enlist in the Confederate Army but is shamed when he is rejected, his work on the railway being considered far too valuable to be forsaken for mere soldiering. When Union spies steal the *General* and head north, Johnnie goes behind enemy lines and brings his train safely home, after chase scenes that have never been matched in a century of film. As Johnnie, Keaton performed all his own stunts, which made a building falling on him seem no more dangerous than a simple pratfall.

The famous director Orson Welles called the film "a masterpiece." Yet *The General* received less than favourable reviews upon its release, with critics suggesting the film was insensitive

TOP: ALAMY B7TKAW; BOTTOM: ALAMY DCJ9JN

in its treatment of the Civil War. Worse for Keaton, the film performed poorly at the box office. His star in Hollywood fell precipitously, and his career faded to black when silent movies gave way to the talkies.

The General played a significant role in Gerald Potterton — the director of *The Railrodder* — falling in love with the movies in the days before the Second World War. "I remember watching Buster's movies — it would have been about 1938, 1939 in south London, where I grew up, at the Odeon," said Potterton, interviewed at the age of ninety-one at his long-time home in Quebec's Eastern Townships. "They had a Saturday-morning kid show with Laurel and Hardy and Charlie Chaplin and Buster. I howled with laughter with Laurel and Hardy, but with Buster I was more amazed by his antics in *The General* and his shorts."

Buster Keaton in *Steamboat Bill, Jr.* This scene shows what may be Keaton's most famous film stunt: The facade of an entire house falls all around him while he stands in the perfect spot to pass through the open attic window instead of being flattened.

Potterton's love of movies led to a career in the film business, first in England and by the early 1960s with the NFB. He worked in both live action and animation. In the spring of 1964, his star was rising — he had received an Academy Award nomination for his animated short *My Financial Career*, an adaptation of a Stephen Leacock story. According to Potterton, *The Railrodder* was spawned not by an artistic vision but rather by simple bookkeeping.

"A lot of things have to fall into place for a film to get made, but with *The Railrodder* the key thing was money left over in the budget at the [financial] year's end," he said. "If it weren't for that, the film would never have happened."

Potterton had in mind a film project with a train theme, something along the lines of *London to Brighton in Four Minutes*, a BBC short using speeded-up footage of an eighty-two kilometre trip between the two cities, shot from an engineer's point of view.

On a drive to the NFB's office in Montreal, he saw a railway bridge and a worker in a construction helmet zooming across it in a motorized cart called a speeder, or draisine. "I had been thinking about a film about going across by the country and then [after seeing the speeder] thought: What a way to do it!"

Potterton doesn't remember who originally floated the idea of casting Buster Keaton in the lead role. But he remembers being puzzled when the silent-film legend's name came up in a meeting of the NFB's animation department. "I said, 'He's dead, isn't he?' I really had no idea."

Wolf Koenig, a shining light in the NFB's stable of filmmakers, mentioned that he had just seen Keaton in a bit role in the 1963 big-budget Hollywood farce *It's a Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad World*. Unbeknownst to Potterton, interest in Keaton was slowly coming back. Keaton had made millions at his peak in the early days of Hollywood and, in a standard show-business storyline, his reputation and fortune had vanished as quickly as it came. In the 1930s and 1940s, an embittered Keaton had drowned his sorrows in alcohol and had been reduced to working on screenplays as a writer without credit, coming up

Above left: Buster Keaton, right, meets with *The Railrodder* director Gerald Potterton, left, and assistant director Joyce Kirkpatrick. Above right: Buster Keaton holds a clapboard on a railway bridge during the filming of *The Railrodder.*

TOP RIGHT: ALAMY. BOTTOM LEFT: COURTESY OF GERALD POTTERTON. BOTTOM RIGHT: DAVID DE VOLPI

with laugh-generating gags for the other comedians like the Marx Brothers, Lucille Ball, and Red Skelton. Occasionally he found walk-on parts in B movies. In the early 1950s, he did manage to steal scenes in a couple of cameo roles that drew conspicuously from his life story: a near-blind vaudevillian comic opposite Charlie Chaplin in *Limelight*; and one of a trio of washed-up silent-film stars playing bridge with leading lady Gloria Swanson as Norma Desmond in *Sunset Boulevard*. (His only line of dialogue was a single word: "Pass.")

"His appearances in pictures such as *Limelight* … served to convince an increasing large number of people that Keaton was a living legend," Tom Dardis wrote in his 1995 biography *Keaton: The Man who Wouldn't Lie Down*.

Many of Keaton's supporters in Hollywood rescued his films from certain extinction — their silver nitrate gave them a shelf life of forty years, and even by the late 1950s many had deteriorated to the point that some reels couldn't be salvaged. Those who restored his films and made them available to new generations of fans doubtlessly influenced the members of the Motion Picture Academy who presented him with an honorary Oscar in the spring of 1960.

In the wake of the Academy Awards, Keaton starred in a memorable episode of the television show *The Twilight Zone*, fittingly as an inventor circa 1890 whose time-travel contraption landed him in the year 1961, where mayhem ensued. He took on bit parts in campy teen comedies like *Beach Blanket Bingo*. He also landed dozens of commercials, including a role as the sidekick of Speedy, the animated character in Alka Seltzer commercials.

All of this is to say that Keaton wasn't just alive but also available to work.

Potterton arranged to meet Keaton and his wife at the Essex Hotel in New York to discuss a proposed travel movie. He had typed up a two-page outline with the working title *The Traveling Man: a nine-minute short.* In conversation he refers to it as "the so-called script."

It could have been a tough sell. This wasn't a day shoot like *Sunset Boulevard* nor even a week in the studio like *Limelight* and *The Twilight Zone*. The demands on the actor, who was in failing health as he approached his sixty-ninth birthday, would be significant. As laid out in the outline, the suggested locations included Montreal, the backwoods of northern Ontario, the coast of the Great Lakes, the prairies, and finally the Rockies. Potterton told Keaton that the shoot would take five weeks. (It would, in fact, take six.) And he told Keaton that, with a $100,000 budget, he had set aside $5,000 for the star's salary. While this might seem a puny sum, it was the same weekly rate that Chaplin had paid Keaton for *Limelight*.

Further, Potterton was competing with heavyweights for Keaton's time. He had already booked work on a French film with a screenplay by the estimable Irish Modernist Samuel Beckett. Potterton had to appeal to Keaton's artistic vision, his sense of symmetry and irony: This NFB short would be a return to the form that had established him as a star. In lieu of the noble *General* in the eponymous classic, Keaton would cross the country on an unnamed draisine.

Yet, as Potterton recalls, negotiations were easy and brief. "Buster said he'd do it if we got him a wild duck dinner during

Buster Keaton walks out of the Atlantic Ocean in Nova Scotia during the filming of *The Railrodder*.

DAVID DE VOLPI

Above: Buster Keaton sits on a railway speeder while crossing Canada in *The Railrodder*.

Right: Keaton's wife Eleanor Keaton on location with him in Nova Scotia during filming.

Far right: Director Gerald Potterton and Buster Keaton during a break in shooting.

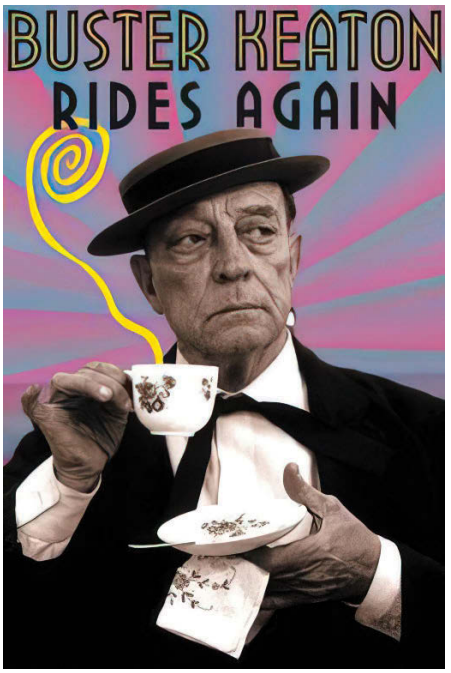
production," he said. "I was sort of stunned by it. I thought it was a joke, but to him it wasn't." The duck wasn't written into the contract, but Keaton was willing to take it on good faith.

Executives at the NFB recognized that several weeks of production and cross-country travel with Keaton presented them with a unique opportunity: a chance to document the legendary star in the late autumn of his life, at work on the film. Given the constraints of the production — Keaton and crew all rode on the same train — the filmmakers had not just a cooperative subject but in fact one who would be confined for the duration of the shoot.

The NFB had established a reputation for its intimate documentary portraits of artists at work. Most notably among them, Glenn Gould was the subject of two half-hour episodes of *Candid Eye*, CBC's documentary series in the late 1950s. John Spotton was an all-purpose filmmaker — a producer, director, cinematographer, and editor — who had worked on several shorts for *Candid Eye*. When NFB executives gave the green light to Spotton for a documentary on Keaton to be shot behind the scenes during the filming of Potterton's short, they were handing the assignment to a veteran with fifteen years of experience with the board. As it would turn out, Potterton's film evoked Keaton's silent films of the 1920s, and Spotton's documentary, in tandem, anticipated the making-of features that would become standard stuff as DVD extras in the twenty-first century. Exactly what Spotton's expectations were can only be a matter of conjecture — he drowned during a vacation to Cuba in 1991. Doubtless, though, he knew of Keaton's reputation. As Dardis wrote in his biography: "Buster was a truly private person and none of his close friends claimed to know how he felt about anything except his work. The Great Stone Face was an enigma to all who knew him well." Spotton's task could have been a chase in vain, much like the Union soldiers' pursuit of Johnnie Gray in *The General*. Many would have expected a study of a dour, bitter man whose career trajectory had crashed instead of soared. Or perhaps they'd have presumed that the documentary would reveal an impassive Keaton, incapable of emotion and laughter, as if his characters were a carry-over from the man himself.

For the simple reason of geography, Potterton's film was shot in sequence, from east to west. "Everything had to be moving right to left," he said. On the first day of shooting — the far right as it were — the director feared things might go wrong.

TOP: ALAMY ZABEGTO. LOWER LEFT: DAVID DE VOLPI. LOWER RIGHT: COURTESY OF GERALD POTTERTON



Above left: The DVD cover of the NFB documentary *Buster Keaton Rides Again.* Above right: Keaton, centre, on location with documentary filmmaker John Spotton, right, and cameraman Bob Humble, left.

The first Canadian scene of *The Railrodder* is a memorable one: Keaton walks out of the surf onto the beach in Nova Scotia (after, presumably, having swum down the Thames River and across the Atlantic Ocean). The identity of the actor is clear — the camera on the beach was close enough to capture the Great Stone Face in detail. Unknown to viewers, though, is the time of year: Shooting commenced in October 1964. "The water had to be frigid," Potterton said. "I offered him a stunt double, but he wanted nothing to do with it. He was determined to take it to the limits." Despite his age and several past bouts of pneumonia, Keaton wasn't about to compromise with a stunt man or the protection of a wet suit, not even when the scene required several takes while he and Potterton played with sight gags. Years earlier, Keaton had explained his willingness to take on daunting, even perilous, physical risks in five words: "Stunt doubles don't get laughs."

Potterton still marvels about that first day on location. "Buster was, in a funny kind of way, superhuman." While worried that Keaton might be tempting hypothermia, Potterton also wondered if the star was going to be difficult to work with. One point of contention on the first day of shooting was whether Keaton should wear his trademark porkpie hat. "With Buster coming out of the water and onto the beach we tried a straw hat and then another kind of boater," Potterton said. "Nothing worked so well as his old standby."

There was also a dispute over seagull droppings.

"At one point I said, 'Buster, there could be a poop sound and you look up and a seagull has pooped on you," Potterton recalled. Keaton's reply was succinct and withering: "We'll leave those kinds of gags to Peter Sellers."

Potterton's fears of conflict were never realized, however. The film proved to be a happy collaboration between the young director and the showbiz ancient. "I learned a lot from Buster but most of all that I didn't know that much," Potterton said.

Keaton had lost much of his physical ability, but his creative instincts were intact, and his sense of professionalism was ever a point of pride. As he wrote in *My Wonderful World of Slapstick,* his slim autobiography, "I was the only MGM star who had never failed to show up for work on time. Unlike [others], I was never temperamental, never refused to do anything required of me, including the most hazardous stunts in my pictures."

Potterton drew up storyboards of only a couple of scenes. "I was just winging it," he said. "We really didn't know what was going to happen the next day." The sight gags ranged from the broad, such as pratfalls, to those so subtle that they might be missed, even after multiple viewings. The latter category includes a scene in New Brunswick where the speeder rolls to a stop, its gas tank empty — only sharp-eyed fans will pick up, in the background, an oil refinery.

While *The General* leaned heavily on the courage and resourcefulness of Johnnie Gray, Keaton's never-named character in *The Railrodder* remains either eerily calm or completely oblivious when disaster looms. In one sequence, the speeder careens down the track heading for what seems like a certain head-on collision with an engine coming from the opposite direction. Catastrophe is averted only when, at the last breath, Keaton bends down, flips a switch, and veers onto another track. The documentary reveals how the fear and suspense on the screen reflect the feelings experienced by the filmmakers themselves. "There were times I was really worried that he might get killed," Potterton said.

TOP LEFT: WIKIMEDIA. TOP RIGHT: DAVID DE VOLPI

The documentary *Buster Keaton Rides Again* is deeply embedded, fly-on-the-wall stuff, capturing Keaton at work on *The Railrodder*, developing scenes and gags with Potterton, and behind the scenes on the train, dealing cards or strumming the ukulele and holding court with stories about bygone-era Hollywood. His shyness comes through when he's out in public, when fans seek his autograph at a stop in Montreal, or when he is feted by the townspeople of Rivers, Manitoba, and greeted by their pipe band in full regalia. That shyness becomes full on dread when he takes questions at a press event, in part because his hearing loss frustrated him.

The documentary focuses on Keaton and his wife, Eleanor Keaton (née Norris), whom he married in 1940. Perhaps the most revealing aspect of the documentary is their relationship, in which she plays the roles of his compass and protector, sometimes outmatched. "He's been insisting for the last three or four years he's at least partially retired and intends to retire completely," she tells the filmmaker. "And then the phone rings."

The Railrodder postage stamp produced by Canada Post in 2014.

The camera catches the baleful stone face — Keaton's default expression — but it's almost always at odds with his mood. In fact, he can barely contain his joy and amusement when an assistant cameraman boards the train at one stop with the promised duck, freshly felled and still warm. Keaton compliments the cameraman on his marksmanship, calling him "the hero of the day."

The duck became a meal on the table and a prompt for a gag that was shot the next day. In it, a hungry Keaton converts the speeder into a moving, shrub-enclosed duck blind and takes aim with a shotgun at birds while he speeds down the rails. The blasts terrify nearby railway workers and send them running for their lives. Spotton's film gives a glimpse into Keaton's creative process — how he and Potterton sketched out the sequence on the fly — but also the tedium of filmmaking — waiting hours for the sky to clear. And in this case *Buster Keaton Rides Again* might outstrip *The Railrodder* for pure absurdity: The railway workers encountered and recruited en route were Italian immigrants who barely spoke a word of English, and their inability to follow Keaton's directions added up to a scene of comedic miscommunication that could have come straight out of vaudeville.

More than the short film, the documentary has a wistful, bittersweet, or even tragicomic aspect. Throughout, Keaton's physical struggles are obvious and perhaps to be expected, given the usual ravages of age and all the abuse that he put his body through with silent-film stunt work. His voice might always have been a croak, but his persistent cough is not a simple clearing of his throat or the product of a head cold. Eleanor Keaton speaks on film of her husband's health struggles. "It was clear during the shoot that he wasn't well, that a couple of times he coughed up blood," Potterton said. "He didn't let on and wasn't about to complain or let it stop him."

In fact, *Buster Keaton Rides Again* was really Buster Keaton's last ride. He did a couple of small pieces of work in the wake of *The Railrodder* — including the flick with Beckett — but shut down completely in December 1965 and was soon after diagnosed with lung cancer. His health forced him to take his often-promised retirement.

The afterlife of *The Railrodder* has been one that neither the NFB nor Potterton could have expected. On its release critics were cool at best, many labelling its humour silly, broad, and anachronistic, as if slapstick had long passed its best-before date. "To that point NFB films had either been artistic or educational and not for entertainment purposes," said Chris Seguin, a friend of Potterton and a member of the Damfinos, the international Buster Keaton appreciation society. Audiences, though, responded on a scale that neither the film board nor the director could have imagined. According to its records from 1965 to 1973, the NFB sold the television and film rights in forty-three international markets. Every continent was represented, save Antarctica. Over the last five years, *The Railrodder* has been viewed on YouTube by almost one million people.

As a living link to Keaton and the silent-film era, Potterton appears at the annual conventions of the Damfinos. "I remember a screening [of *The Railrodder*] in Poland that I was invited to a few years back," he said. "A young fellow introduced himself and told me he had composed an entirely new soundtrack for it, and an orchestra played it during a screening. I've always been amazed by the reach of what was this little travel short that we did with the money left over in the budget."

Today, *Buster Keaton Rides Again* connects audiences with a major artist in film history, while *The Railrodder* connects them with history of a different sort, namely that of Canada circa 1964. The ad in the *Times* said, "SEE CANADA NOW," but the film is an opportunity to see Canada then. The swing bridge over the St. Lawrence River, the site of one of the film's early gags, has been locked into place for decades now. Ottawa's downtown Union Station closed just two years after Keaton's train rolled through. The town of Rivers, Manitoba, was unincorporated in 2015 when it merged with another municipality. Buildings along the route have come down, while others have gone up. Predictably, the big-screen theatre where I saw *The Railrodder* is long gone. The natural landscape, though, is the constant, where then and now come together. NFB curator Albert Ohayon sums it up neatly: "Buster Keaton was the star of *The Railrodder,* but Canada was the co-star."

GABE JOYCE / CANADA POST

EXPLORATION & EMPIRE

Guided by Indigenous knowledge and European navigational science, fur trader Alexander Mackenzie embarked on a perilous journey across the Great Divide.

by Barry Gough

AS THE END OF THE EIGHTEENTH century approached, the interior of the northwest coast of North America remained *terra incognita* to European science and knowledge. Indigenous peoples who lived there and harvested its abundant resources to their prosperity, profit, and political power — backed by trading relationships and, sometimes, warfare — were fully conversant with its geographical dimensions. These were cordilleran lands where the Kootenai, Shuswap, Blackfoot, and others had crossed mountain passes for generations. When fur trader and trade visionary Alexander Mackenzie transited through these lands in 1793 on his famed crossing from Fort Chipewyan, on Lake Athabasca, to the Pacific Ocean, he had no way of knowing whether the Indigenous people he met would greet him as a friend or take up arms against him to defend their territory from incursion.

In the event, Indigenous peoples were vital to Mackenzie's proceedings. In particular, they gave critical advice in pointing a way to the continent's western rim and in doing so directed him away from a perilous passage down the Fraser River, which would have been the end of his voyage and might well have ended in death for himself and members of his party.

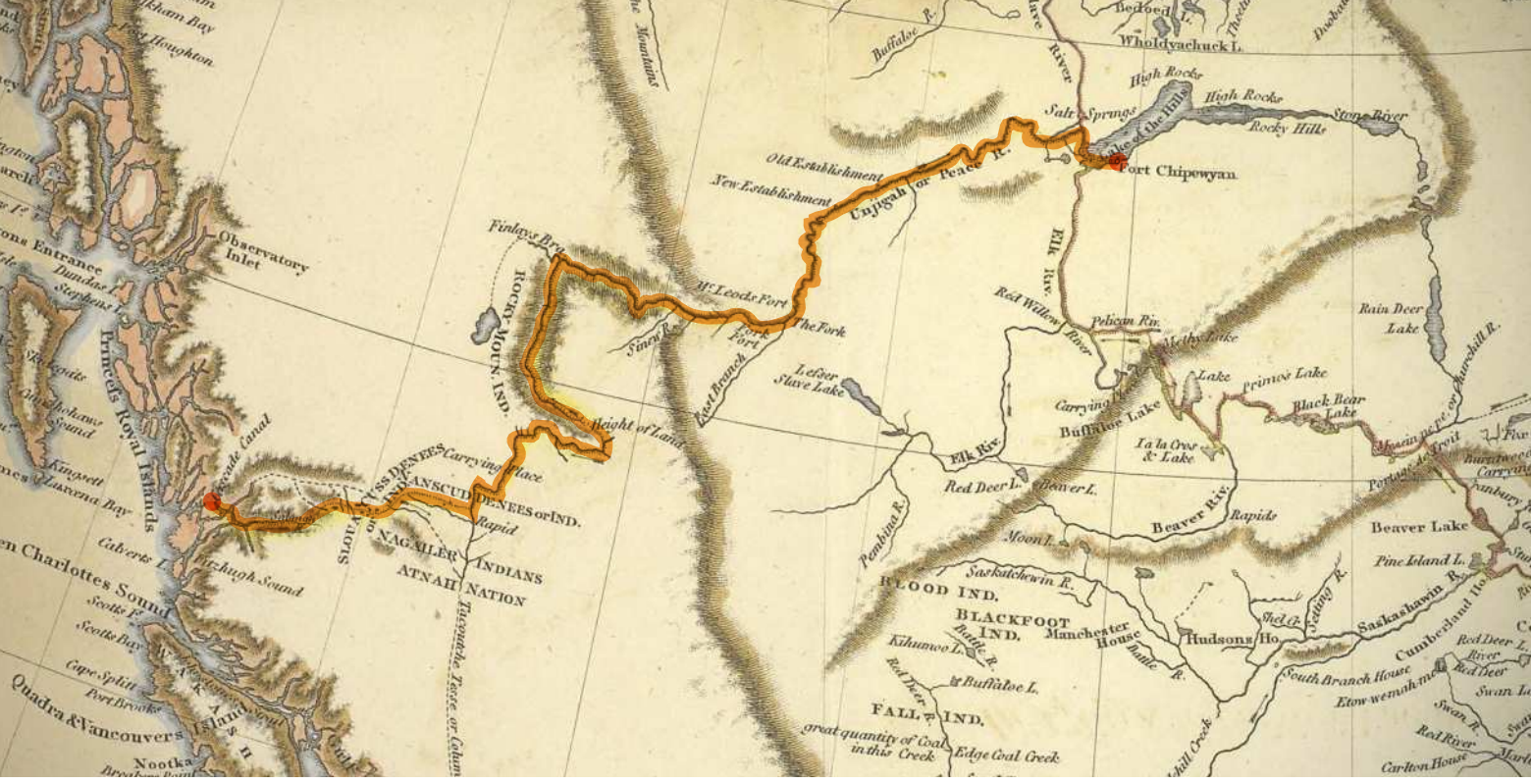
Make no mistake: Thanks to Indigenous advice, Mackenzie was the first person in recorded history to cross the continent north of Mexico. All the same, the scheme was devised by him alone, and he led it to a successful conclusion. His explorations, recounted in his classic travel narrative published in 1801 and entitled *Voyages from Montreal on the River St. Lawrence through the Continent of North America to the Frozen and Pacific Oceans in the Years 1789 and 1793*, disclosed the secrets of northwestern North America to British, European, and American publics. The results gave new impetus to ambitions of trans-Pacific trade and British trade expansion on the Pacific coast and adjacent seas. All of this foreshadowed the prospect of Canada as a country spanning the North American continent from coast to coast.

Aged thirty-one when he undertook his journey, Mackenzie possessed exceptional characteristics: He was enterprising, self-sufficient, prescient, able to endure unimaginable hardships and to lead from the front. His passage to the western edge of the continent reveals how difficult were the geographical circumstances faced by him and his party; furthermore, how complex and demanding were the relations posed by the Indigenous peoples (of various nations and groups) in the course of his passage to and from Pacific tidewater.

We situate Mackenzie and his party in time. It was the spring of 1793. Preparations for the coming adventure were well underway at Fort Fork, a rustic collection of wooden buildings on the banks of the Peace River, some eight hundred kilometres upriver from Fort Chipewyan, a key North West Company establishment on Lake Athabasca. After leaving Fort Chipewyan the previous autumn, Mackenzie and his men had built Fort Fork and spent the winter there, using it as an advance base for their planned trek to the Pacific Ocean. As soon as the ice on the river broke up in May, Mackenzie intended to make a fast dash to the Pacific Ocean and then back to Fort Chipewyan in a single summer. The journey across formidable landscapes of rivers, portages,

OPPOSITE PAGE: THE STAPLETON COLLECTION / BRIDGEMAN IMAGES

Led by an Indigenous guide, Alexander Mackenzie stands in a canoe as voyageurs paddle down the Bella Coola River toward the Pacific Ocean in this 1906 Frederic Remington illustration.



A map from Alexander Mackenzie's 1801 book *Voyages from Montreal on the River St. Lawrence through the Continent of North America to the Frozen and Pacific Oceans in the Years 1789 and 1793.* Mackenzie's route from Fort Chipewyan to the Pacific Ocean is marked in orange.

and plateaus, with no map and no known path to follow, would prove arduous and dangerous in the extreme.

Mackenzie's purpose in attempting this journey was threefold: first, to determine the distance from Fort Chipewyan to the Pacific coast and thus to establish the breadth of North America in the latitude of approximately fifty-five degrees north; second, to discover the nature of the mountains, valleys, and rivers of the far west in those latitudes; third, and not least, to open trade in furs with the Russians, who had already established trading posts at Cook Inlet, Alaska, and elsewhere on the Pacific coast. By bringing furs from the North American interior to Pacific trading posts, and thence into the markets of China and Japan, Mackenzie aimed to change the concept of British North America from a colony focused on supplying the markets of the east coast from the hinterland of the West to a continent-wide keystone of the British Empire, trading equally adeptly out of its Pacific and Atlantic ports.

The waters and shoreline of the northwest coast were already well known to Spanish, Russian, British, French, and American merchant mariners and official explorers who plied the waters of the Pacific and traded along its coast. The missing piece remained the fabled Northwest Passage through the continent that would link the Atlantic and Pacific oceans. Armchair geographers in Europe, the United States, and eastern Canada dreamed of finding a navigable passage between these two oceans. Attempts to find an entrance to the passage had been made from both the east coast and the west coast — "the backside of America," as one Elizabethan called it — going back to the late sixteenth century.

While mariners explored the coastal waters, overland came the fur-trading explorers. In 1775, Peter Pond, one of the founders and organizational masterminds of the North West Company, imagined a riverine route from Great Slave Lake, in present-day Northwest Territories, to Cook Inlet in the Gulf of Alaska — though, in the end, the route proved non-existent. In sum, the northwest coast remained, as the editor of a book by the French navigator Jean-François de Galaup, Comte de Laperouse, called it, "the theatre of all the geographical fictions." A route between the oceans, if found, would unlock the fabled markets of the Orient. On the northwest coast — where options to find an entrance to the elusive Northwest Passage were narrowing — the British Admiralty ordered an exploratory expedition. In the summer of 1793, having left Portsmouth, England, two years previously, Captain George Vancouver was examining every inlet and sound on the high-latitude coast of what is now British Columbia, his rain-soaked boat parties from the sloop of war *Discovery* and the brig *Chatham* working with precision towards the Skeena River.

Now came the magic — even supreme — moment, for the long tentacles of British sea power were about to touch the outstretched hand of British overland exploration, personified in Mackenzie's extraordinary journey. A pincher movement, so to speak, was at work. It closed on a highly complex Indigenous world of many peoples and many languages and dialects, a world in which rivalries were vibrant and warfare not unknown, a world, too, awakening to the material reality of the industrial age. This was one of the most populous parts of Indigenous North America. On the cusp of change, the New World was being reordered. The Indigenous nations and peoples meant to be part of the changes, and they entertained the strangers that came from far away, proud and confident as they were of their own power, prestige, and future.

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Mackenzie was born in 1762 in Stornoway, on Scotland's Isle of Lewis. His father was a property manager who also commanded the local militia. Arriving as a young scholar in the British colony of New York at age twelve, he was sent for further education to Montreal, where he learned accounting in a firm that formed one of the partnerships in the North West Company. The rival Hudson's Bay Company had possessed a charter from the British Crown since 1670 giving it exclusive rights of trade in the 3.9 million square kilometres of lands drained by all the rivers flowing into Hudson Bay and known as Rupert's Land. The North West Company had no such charter and necessarily worked along the margins of HBC territory. In Mackenzie's time it outflanked the HBC in a broad semicircular sweep of lands that drained northwest and west of Rupert's Land, including the Athabasca River watershed. Mackenzie had keen business abilities and sharp instincts. International trade was of compelling interest to him. Sent west by principals in the firm who realized his immense promise, Mackenzie was a rising star in the company.

At Fort Chipewyan, Peter Pond's geopolitical thinking and mastery of long-distance land trading enraptured the younger Mackenzie. Pond had intended to pursue the possible trails to Cook Inlet — a 350-kilometre-long inlet in the Gulf of Alaska that was thought, at the time, to be the mouth of a great river flowing east to west across the continent. But Pond had been obliged, by company demand, to withdraw from the wilderness — a cloud over his head because of an alleged murder committed against a rival trader.

Mackenzie seized the day; he embraced Pond's abandoned project. In 1789 he went in search of "Cook's River." Yet, after travelling for many weeks on a river the Dene called Deh-Cho, or Great River, he was disappointed to reach the discharge of those waters into the Arctic Ocean. The Rocky Mountains barred his way to the Pacific and to the Russian trading posts on the west coast of Alaska. Mackenzie's river voyage — five thousand kilometres in that long summer of 102 days — is a harrowing tale. Privately, to his cousin Roderick, he called Deh-Cho "the River Disappointment."

His objective remained: to stand on the shores of the Pacific Ocean by going west in northern latitudes. Returned to Fort Chipewyan, he knew he did not have the scientific knowledge to record longitude by anything other than unreliable dead reckoning. To remedy this deficiency, he went to London on furlough. There he mastered the arts of navigation and surveying. He learned to use the sextant to measure the angle between the Earth's horizon and heavenly bodies, such as the sun or moon, and how to use this measurement to calculate latitude. He learned how to sight the moons of Jupiter, which, in their predictable orbit around that planet, form a kind of astronomical clock. He learned how to cross-reference his sightings with the data gathered in the *Nautical Almanac* and thereby determine his longitude. With this knowledge, he could place on a blank chart his exact geographic location. Scientific method could now replace geographical speculation: Mackenzie was armed for the supreme challenge of finding and determining the position of the continent's western shore.

NATIONAL GALLERY OF CANADA

An oil painting of Alexander Mackenzie by Thomas Lawrence, circa 1800–1801. The portrait now hangs in the National Gallery of Canada.

In early May 1793, as the ice broke up on the Peace River, Mackenzie made the final preparations for his voyage. His Athapaskan interpreter feared the worst. "My winter interpreter," wrote Mackenzie when about to leave Fort Fork, "with another person whom I left here to take care of the fort and supply the natives with ammunition during the summer, shed tears on the reflection of those dangers which we might encounter in our expedition, while our own people offered up their prayers that we might return in safety from it."

On May 9, 1793, Mackenzie and his men set out on their journey. The exploring party consisted of ten people — Mackenzie, his kinsman Alexander MacKay (or McKay), six Canadian voyageurs, two Athapaskan hunter-interpreters — and a dog. In a birchbark canoe 7.6 metres in length and built to his specifications, Mackenzie shipped provisions, presents for the Indigenous people he would meet, arms, ammunition, navigational instruments, and baggage – a total of a tonne and a half of cargo.

When the river ice broke up, he began his way upstream. His party faced strong headwinds and swift currents. The men progressed upriver through the grassy country, past herds of buffalo attending their young. The ground rose to a considerable height — a vast, magnificent theatre of nature, with groves of poplars and other softwoods. After several days the river narrowed and the distant mountains came into view. Grizzly bears were seen — and avoided. Mackenzie's voyageurs worked tirelessly, often in fear of their lives as they manoeuvred their canoe around boulders amid the raging current.

His voyage up and through the ramparts of the Rockies was hazardous. If the canoe were to be wrecked or capsized, the men would lose their provisions, ammunition, trade items, gifts, dried food, rum, and navigational instruments. The

Above: A grizzly bear. Alexander Mackenzie saw, and avoided, such bears during his voyage.

Left: A twentieth-century drawing portrays Mackenzie and his voyageurs nearly capsizing their canoe in a perilous set of rapids.

TOP LEFT: © LOOK AND LEARN / BRIDGEMAN IMAGES. TOP RIGHT: GILLIAN LLOYD / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO. BOTTOM: BRANDON SMITH / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

afternoon of May 20 found them towing their canoe upriver, battling a current so fierce they could not paddle against it. "The agitation of the water was so great, that a wave striking on the bow of the canoe broke the [tow rope], and filled us with inexpressible dismay, as it appeared impossible that the vessel could escape from being dashed to pieces and those who were in her from perishing," Mackenzie wrote. "Another wave, however, more propitious than the former, drove her out of the tumbling water, so that the men were enabled to bring her ashore." Ahead of them, the river formed "one white sheet of foaming water." It was time to rest for the night.

As they continued to ascend the mountains toward the Continental Divide, the difficulties, discouragements, and dangers of the enterprise led Mackenzie to decide to travel overland. Over the following days, they cut a trail through the woods, about four hundred metres from the river. Looping their tow ropes for leverage around the tree stumps that lined their newly cut road, they hauled their canoe up the slope, "so that we may be said, with strict truth, to have warped the canoe up the mountain … by general and most laborious exertion," Mackenzie wrote. He broke out the rum keg at the evening meal.

On May 24 they arrived at a river, allowing them to continue their voyage by canoe. But this river, like the others on which they had travelled, flowed west to east; they had not yet crossed the Continental Divide. Based on previous conversations with Indigenous traders and hunters, Mackenzie believed that a river flowing east to west, into the Pacific Ocean, must lie nearby. However, his efforts to find it were fruitless.

In the afternoon of June 9, Mackenzie met a party of thirteen or fourteen Sekani. After conversing with them for several hours, giving them gifts and sharing his provisions, eventually he was told of "a large river that runs towards the midday sun" and that could be reached by crossing three lakes and descending a small river. The Sekani also told him of the people who lived beside the "Stinking Lake" — which Mackenzie interpreted as meaning the Pacific Ocean — and whose territory could be reached by travelling "during a moon." They added that the coastal people "trade with people like us [Europeans],

The Bella Coola River in British Columbia.

that come there in vessels as big as islands."

Accompanied for the following week by a Sekani guide, Mackenzie continued his journey with renewed vigour. Sometime in mid-June, the party of explorers crossed the Continental Divide, for on June 17 Mackenzie wrote: "At length we enjoyed, after all our toil and anxiety, the inexpressible satisfaction of finding ourselves on the bank of a navigable river, on the West side of the first great range of mountains."

The river was wide and deep, the current very slack, but as they proceeded southwards the river narrowed and the land rose high on either side. Near the end of June they came to a small settlement, where Mackenzie asked the Indigenous people for information about the river ahead of them. Throughout his journey, Mackenzie had taken meticulous compass bearings, estimated the distance travelled each day by dead reckoning, and — when conditions allowed — taken "horizon" measurements to ascertain his latitude. He therefore had a fair idea of his geographical location, despite having no knowledge of the terrain ahead. The Indigenous people told him he was travelling on a river they called Tatouche Tesse. Based on their description, and on his own geographical calculations, he considered that Tatouche Tesse could be a branch of the Columbia River, which emptied into the Pacific Ocean at about forty-six degrees north latitude, much farther south than his intended route. Although he was mistaken about this, he would have proceeded down Tatouche Tesse (later named the Fraser River) had he not calculated that he could not make that voyage to the Pacific and back to Fort Chipewyan in one season; the extra distance involved in the detour south would add too many days to the journey. In addition, the Indigenous people warned that going downriver on the wild and furious Tatouche Tesse would lead to certain death. Here and elsewhere his western route was determined on the basis of Indigenous advice.

But forsaking the journey down Tatouche Tesse meant returning to a point upriver where an overland trail, described to him by the local people, would lead to another river that discharged into the Pacific. In his diary on June 23, Mackenzie wrote: "I now called those of my people about me, who had not been present at my consultation with the natives; and after passing a warm eulogium on their fortitude, patience, and perseverance, I stated the difficulties that threatened our continuing to navigate the [Tatouche Tesse] river, the length of time it would require, and the scanty provision we had for such a voyage. I then proceeded for the foregoing reasons to propose a shorter route, by trying the over-land road to the sea. … At all events, I declared, in the most solemn manner, that I would not abandon my design of reaching the sea, if I made the attempt alone, and that I did not despair of returning in safety to my friends. … This proposition met with the most zealous return, and they unanimously assured me, that they were as willing now as they had ever been, to abide by my resolutions, whatever they might be, and to follow me wherever I should go."

Returning upriver to a point near present-day Quesnel, B.C., he and his party pressed west, against the current of a stream he called West Road River. Storing the canoe and caching supplies to await their return, he and his companions took to the trails. They sought out and found a track known as the Nuxalk-Carrier Grease Trail, so-called because the Nuxalk and Carrier people used the track as a trading route, and it was marked by the oil of the eulachon, or "candle fish," which dripped from the boxes carried by the traders. A major trade artery of both Indigenous and, by Mackenzie's time, European goods, the trail linked Tatouche Tesse in the east with the village of Bella Coola in the west.

"IT APPEARED IMPOSSIBLE THAT THE VESSEL COULD ESCAPE FROM BEING DASHED TO PIECES."

Mackenzie and his party passed north of the ancestral lands of the Tsilhqot'in. They were guided by one family and then the next. They climbed to a high plateau, then pressed westwards through "a sea of mountains." Although it was July, the weather was as cruel as any they had encountered. On many days they were drenched by rain. On July 17, in biting winds, they came to the welcome lee of what Mackenzie aptly called Stupendous Mountain, rising 2,672 metres. Then, having crossed the last ridge, they came to the rim of the Bella Coola Gorge. Mackenzie and his men quickly descended a steep and wooded hill, a drop of about nine hundred metres in one afternoon. They came to a waterway he named Burnt Bridge Creek. They were now in a region heavily populated by the Nuxalk. To pursue their explorations and discoveries, both courage and tact would be required in the face of an uncertain reception from the local inhabitants.

The village Mackenzie arrived at on the evening of July 17 lay two hundred metres above the fast-flowing Bella Coola River. The inhabitants called it Nutleax, meaning "place without a waterfall," for the stream on which it lay drained into the Bella Coola River by means of a large, placid delta. Mackenzie called it Friendly Village, for he and his men were generously treated there. "We had not been long seated round it [a fire prepared for them], when we received a large dish of salmon roes, pounded fine and beat up with water so as to have the appearance of a cream." The people of the village made it clear that they wanted no venison to be carried downstream, nor iron to be used to fish for salmon — these they regarded as detrimental to a good salmon catch.

On July 18 Mackenzie's party made its way down the Bella

Coola River in canoes loaned to them by the inhabitants of Friendly Village. "At one in the afternoon we embarked, with our small baggage, in two canoes accompanied by seven of the natives. The stream was rapid, and ran upwards of six miles an hour. We came to a weir … where the natives landed us, and shot over it without taking a drop of water. They then received us on board again and we continued our voyage, passing many canoes on the river," Mackenzie wrote. "I had imagined that the Canadians who accompanied me were the most expert canoe-men in the world, but they are very inferior to these people, as they themselves acknowledged, in conducting those vessels."

"AS WE APPROACHED … THE PEOPLE LAID DOWN THEIR WEAPONS AND CAME FORWARD TO MEET US."

In their exhilarating course downstream, Mackenzie and his men came to Noosgulch, or Nooskultst. This was the Great Village on the north side of the Bella Coola River. There were sixty-one village sites. It was a world of diversity and of community under chiefly power. As they landed their canoes and made their way toward the village, Mackenzie wrote, "some of the Indians ran before us, to announce our approach, when we took our bundles and followed. We had walked along a well-beaten path, through a kind of coppice, when we were informed of the arrival of our couriers at the houses, by the loud and confused talking of the inhabitants…. When we came in sight of the village, we saw them running from house to house, some armed with bows and arrows, others with spears, and many with axes, as if in a state of alarm. This very unpleasant unexpected circumstance, I attributed to our sudden arrival. At all events, I had but one line of conduct to pursue, which was to walk resolutely up to them, without manifesting any signs of apprehension at their hostile appearance. This resolution produced the desire effect, for as we approached the houses, the greater part of the people laid down their weapons, and came forward to meet us. I was, however, soon obliged to stop from the number of them that surrounded me."

All anxiety ended in a disarming bear hug given by the chief — a flattering reception. The chief's son — whom Mackenzie later referred to in his journal as the "young chief" — gave Mackenzie a fine sea otter skin. It is charming to think that this was likely the same one Mackenzie proudly showed to Upper Canada's Lieutenant-Governor John Graves Simcoe when the two men met in Upper Canada more than a year later on September 8, 1794. Elizabeth Gwillim Simcoe, the lieutenant-governor's wife, recorded in her journal: "The otter skins are sold at a great price, by those who trade on the coast, to the Chinese."

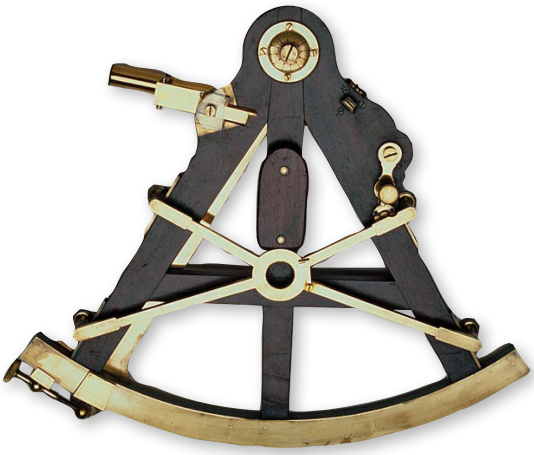
Mackenzie repaid the gift of the robe with presents to the chief and his son of a blanket, "several other articles," and a pair of scissors, with which, the explorer explained, the chief could cut his beard — which he did. Here Mackenzie was shown some blue cloth decorated with buttons, possibly Spanish, he thought, and also a magnificent fifteen-metre cedar canoe, capable of carrying forty persons. Mackenzie never missed a trick in his search for authentic detail. For instance, he stated adamantly that the people of the northwest coast decorated their canoes not with human teeth, as the British mariner Captain James Cook had recounted in his narrative, but rather, as he observed, with the teeth of sea otters.

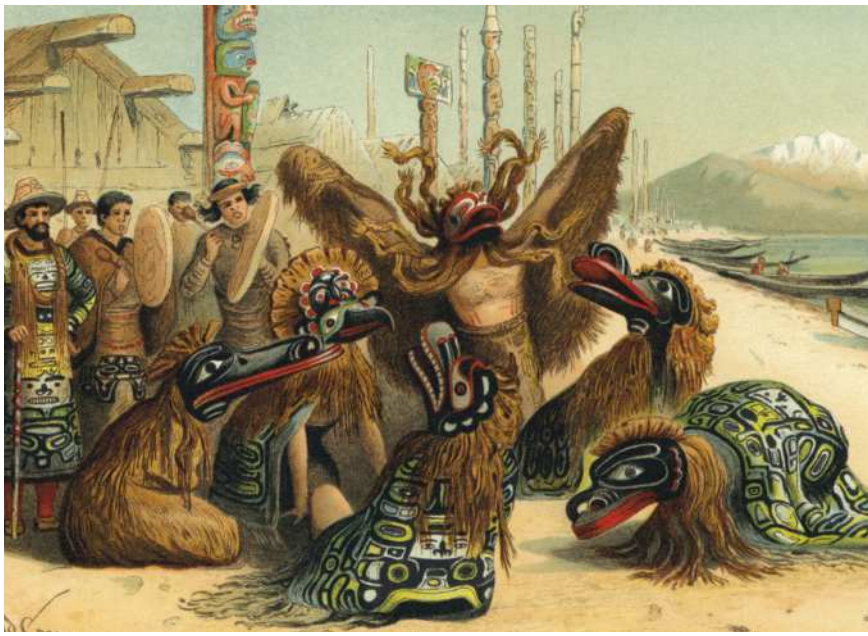
The chief said that about ten years previously he had taken a voyage toward the midday sun, where he had seen two large vessels full of men like Mackenzie — that is, Europeans — by whom he had been kindly received. These were the first Europeans seen by the people of Noosgulch. Mackenzie concluded that these had been Cook's vessels and that the location must have been Nootka Sound, for Cook's course had kept him otherwise offshore. Or perhaps they were the ships of the Scottish maritime fur trader James Strange trading near Cape Scott, on the northernmost tip of Vancouver Island.

The warm initial response from the locals changed, and seemingly became more complex, the closer Mackenzie got to the open Pacific Ocean. The prevalence of mortality owing to disease may have explained the harsh response to the visitors when they entered the more westerly inlets and channels. Smallpox and other infectious diseases had passed this way and would do so again at later times. Marine life here was different, too, for this was the coastal environment of the precious sea otter.

Mackenzie continued his passage westwards, accompanied by the young chief who had given him the otter skin, to another village, which he named "Rascal's Village." This was Qomq'ts, now called Bella Coola. From here, he could see where the river on which he had been travelling ended, discharging itself into a narrow arm of the sea. This arm, at the head of Burke Channel, had been named North Bentinck Arm earlier that year by Vancouver. A ship's boat from Vancouver's expedition had visited the same village on June 1, 1793.

On the morning of July 20, Mackenzie and his company, borrowing a leaky canoe from the village inhabitants and taking two volunteers with them as guides, paddled down the river and into the salt sea. They were seventy-two days out of Fort Fork, which lay some 1,445 kilometres behind them. Success lay within Mackenzie's grasp, but the ultimate challenge remained before he could start his return passage: He needed to determine his exact latitude and longitude, so that ships' captains plying the Pacific coast could find the outlet of the river that had led him to the sea, and so that future fur traders could use the compass bearings and distance estimates that he had noted down during his overland trek to retrace his steps back to Fort Chipewyan on Lake Athabasca.





Above: An eighteenth-century sextant, similar to that used by Alexander Mackenzie. The tool enabled explorers to determine their location by measuring the position of the sun or a planet relative to the horizon.

Right: A depiction of the mask dance of the Nuxalk people by nineteenth-century artist Rudolf Cronau.

On July 21 Mackenzie and his men continued westward through the maze-like channels, searching for the best place to take an unimpeded astrological observation. That day they encountered fifteen Indigenous men in three canoes who, Mackenzie wrote, "examined every thing we had in our canoe with an air of indifference and disdain." A past grievance surfaced. One of the men, in a manner Mackenzie classified as "insolent," told Mackenzie that "a large canoe had lately been in the bay, with people in her like me, and that one of them, whom he called Macubah, had fired on him and his friends, and that Bensins had struck him on the back, with the flat part of his sword." When they landed at a village in Elcho Bay later that day, an unwelcoming villager told Mackenzie that "he had been shot at by people of my colour" and that Macubah — Vancouver — had come there in his large canoe.

This oral evidence of alleged wrongdoing by Vancouver and his shipmate is unsupported by other documentation. Vancouver, who had been in this area in ships' boats in early June, made no references to any difficulties with the Indigenous people he met. It's also unclear whom the name Bensins was meant to designate. The ship's surgeon and naturalist Archibald Menzies — whose name might have been misheard as Bensins — was not recorded to be part of any boat expedition. If by Bensins the complainant meant Master James Johnstone, then perhaps there was reason for his grievance: Johnstone, the leader of a ship's boat, admitted to forcing entrance to a seaside dwelling. In any case, at the time Mackenzie reached the same locale, Vancouver was surveying the far-off waters that divide present-day British Columbia from Alaska.

The rock near Elcho Harbour where Mackenzie and his men landed on July 21 is comparatively level ground when observed against the steep shores nearby. The travellers were glad to find this spot where they could take up a defensive position in case hostilities developed with the local inhabitants. Here, among the most important outcrops in human history, the explorer and his party felt vulnerable to unknown dangers. However, the local people arrived that evening not to attack but to trade. The Indigenous people brought a "very fine sea-otter skin" and a "beautifully white" goat skin to barter, demanding in exchange Mackenzie's short sword, or hanger. But Mackenzie refused the bargain. Nevertheless, some trade was accomplished. Eventually, the traders left. Mackenzie instructed his men to keep watch by two in turn. Then he went to sleep for the night.

At eight o'clock the next morning, July 22, a clear sky happily presented itself. Now the supreme moment had arrived for eighteenth-century science. Mackenzie took out his instruments to begin the process of determining his exact location. He took five altitudes for time and, after making calculations, concluded that his chronometer was slow by one hour, twenty-one minutes, and forty-four seconds. He was then able to make adjustments for his previous mapping.

While Mackenzie was taking these astronomical measurements, two canoes arrived "with several men," including the young chief who had accompanied Mackenzie since the Friendly Village but had briefly left the party to visit with local villagers. As the men set about bartering with Mackenzie's voyageurs, MacKay, Mackenzie's lieutenant, retrieved his burning-glass from his instruments bag. Before long he had lit a fire in the lid of his tobacco box. This so surprised the Indigenous observers that they traded their best sea-otter skin for the glass.

At this point the young chief, Mackenzie's close acquaintance, urged him to leave, warning of enemies who "were as numerous as musquitoes, and of a very malignant character." But Mackenzie had not yet completed the measurements necessary to pinpoint his latitude and longitude. "I was determined not to leave this place, except I was absolutely compelled to it, till I had ascertained its situation," he wrote. He

TOP LEFT: © MCCORD MUSEUM. TOP RIGHT: © LOOK AND LEARN/BRIDGEMAN IMAGES

patiently took a meridian to verify his position. He needed to be sure he had the facts right.

While he was doing this, two "well-manned" canoes appeared. The young chief "renewed his entreaties for our departure, as they would soon come to shoot their arrows and hurl their spears at us." Mackenzie declined to stir from his astronomical duties until he had accomplished his object. But he ordered his men to get their possessions into their canoe in preparation for speedy withdrawal. He calculated the latitude of the rocky islet as being close to what we now know it to be: fifty-two degrees, twenty-two minutes, thirty seconds north.

The two canoes approached and landed, but, instead of a party of warriors, "five men, with their families, landed very quietly from them," Mackenzie wrote. "My instruments being exposed, they examined them with much apparent admiration and astonishment."

With absolute determination Mackenzie completed his task. What he did next was an act of forethought. "I now mixed up some vermilion in melted grease, and inscribed, in large characters, on the South-East face of the rock on which we had slept last night, this brief memorial: "Alexander Mackenzie, from Canada, by land, the twenty-second of July, one thousand seven hundred and ninety-three." Did anyone ever write such a pallid, laconic statement of accomplishment? It was merely a record of who, when, and where. The how and the why are absent from this statement of monumental attainment, whose significance echoes down through the years.

When Mackenzie came to write the account of his voyage, he explained the ever-so-brief window of opportunity he was afforded in achieving his scientific goal: "I had now determined my situation, which is the most fortunate circumstance of my long, painful, and perilous journey, as a few cloudy days would have prevented me from ascertaining the final longitude of it." Now he had the geographical coordinates of the Pacific shore — handsome details indeed to include in his own copyrighted chart that appeared with his voyage account; handsome details, too, for the English cartographer Aaron Arrowsmith to include in his 1802 map of North America. In 1926 Canada's Historic Sites and Monuments Board erected a monument and tablet to mark the terminus of the explorer's passage. The famous inscription was carved in the rock and filled in with red concrete. Mackenzie's rock is now the central feature of the Sir Alexander Mackenzie Provincial Park, which is accessible only by boat.

The return trip was physically and mentally exhausting. On Saturday, August 24, the party finally arrived at Fort Fork. "We threw out our flag, and accompanied it with a general discharge of our fire-arms; while the men were in such spirits, and made such an active use of their paddles, that we arrived before the two men whom we left here in the spring could recover their senses to answer us," he wrote. "Here my voyages of discovery terminate. Their toils and their dangers, their solicitudes and sufferings, have

A 1925 painting by John Innes entitled *Alexander Mackenzie Recording His Arrival at the Pacific, A.D. 1793* depicts the historic moment.

SFU ART COLLECTION. GIFT OF POST #2 NATIVE SONS OF BRITISH COLUMBIA, 2004

Above: The rock on which Alexander Mackenzie recorded the end of his epic journey. Originally written in grease and vermilion, his inscription was later carved into the stone.

Left: The rock inscribed by Mackenzie, as seen from Dean Channel. The site is now part of Sir Alexander Mackenzie Provincial Park near Bella Coola, B.C.

not been exaggerated in my description. On the contrary, in many instances, language has failed me in the attempt to describe them. I received, however, the reward of my labours, for they were crowned with success.… I have now resumed the character of a trader." Later that summer Mackenzie rejoined his Chipewyan wife, The Catt, and their young family at Fort Chipewyan. But he was fatigued and in ill health.

Mackenzie spent one more winter in the interior, cursing it. Then, with his star in the ascendant, he headed to Upper Canada to pay respects to Lieutenant-Governor John Graves Simcoe. He became an agent for many other traders, and Athabasca country became the new Eldorado of northwest North America, with its forests full of fur-bearing creatures. In later years Mackenzie became an articulate voice for Canadian commerce on the Pacific coast and across to China. He urged the British government to secure the inland trade for British subjects, for if it failed to do so, others would come and take it, and the national advantage gained by exploration would be lost. He never tired of bringing to the attention of government the necessity to nurture and protect trade, the lifeblood of empire, of profit and power. However, the path he traced from Fort Chipewyan to Elcho Bay was never developed into a commercial fur-trading route. Facing difficulties with the awkward transportation links in the north-central interior of what is now British Columbia, the North West Company reverted to its customary, less expensive ways of exporting furs, via Montreal and New York. Not until the Hudson's Bay Company, three decades later, mastered the interior routes by using pack horses to circumvent the Fraser River rapids did the Canadian trade on the Pacific flourish and grow.

On reflection, we see how character and circumstance combine to make history. Mackenzie's explorations were self-driven and were made possible by the grudging consent of his business partners, most of whom saw little advantage in geographical pursuits that did not yield financial reward. He expressed impatience with idleness, and he disliked solitude. An enthusiast for economic diversification, fishing, and whaling, Mackenzie was far ahead of his time in thinking about the possible evolution of western North America and of a Canadian gateway to the Pacific Ocean. He could see how the regions of Canada — the Pacific cordillera, the prairie basin, the Winnipeg nexus, the Great Lakes, and the St. Lawrence River — could be linked by trade. This was achieved in a different fashion by the completion of the Canadian Pacific Railway in 1885. Industrial technology of the age of rail and of steam navigation overcame the geographical obstacles that Mackenzie had faced and vividly described.

Mackenzie's *Voyages from Montreal on the River St. Lawrence through the Continent of North America to the Frozen and Pacific Oceans in the Years 1789 and 1793* was published in 1801. Why did it take seven years to get the work into print? In consequence of his arduous travels, Mackenzie suffered depression, major illness, and mental derangement. Dreams and visions kept him from completing his text; so did political interference. Aided by an editor, his work eventually reached the bookstalls and was an instant success. It has since become a classic of travel literature. As to the original journals upon which the book is based, only the record of Mackenzie's voyage to the Arctic has survived in manuscript form.

We leave Mackenzie now, a bit breathless from the exhausting efforts of the passage he, his party, and their guides made through and over the mountains of the West. He never required more of his men than he did of himself; he led from the front. None of his party deserted. The outward journey from Fort Fork to the Pacific Ocean amounted to some 1,511 kilometres over seventy-four days. The return was more trying for a number of reasons, but he brought his whole expedition party safely and speedily home. His voyages of discovery foreshadowed a Canadian presence on the northwest coast, a rise that limited Russian progression southwards from Alaska, removed Spanish imperial ambitions and activities northwards from Mexico and California, and, in 1846, checked U.S. expansion by sea and land north of the forty-ninth parallel, leaving Vancouver Island in British, and later Canadian, hands and the continental realm under the same control.

TOP LEFT: GUNTER MARX / WC / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO. TOP RIGHT: JOHN HARVEY

THE QUICKENING FLAVOUR

First used by the Dene, Slave River salt deposits became a critical resource for HBC fur traders.

by Patrick Carroll

IN THE 1790S, THE HUDSON'S BAY COMPANY FACED A DILEMMA. INDEPENDENT traders had circumvented the bayside trade and had set up posts on Lake Athabasca, some nine hundred kilometres inland from the coast of Hudson Bay, claiming the richest fur territory on the continent. To compete, the HBC would have to restructure its operations and move inland, finding new methods to address the logistics and costs of transporting trade items into the northwest interior and furs to the coast.

In preparing for this change, nothing was overlooked, including the question of how to preserve food. Salted meat and fowl formed a large part of the traders' diet while the company was still based on the shores of Hudson Bay. Traders would receive their salt annually on supply ships from Britain. But, once the HBC decided to move inland, provisioning the company's outposts with salt, an essential preservative, became more problematic.

Salt was heavy and bulky. Transporting it inland, whether by canoe or on foot, was economically inefficient in conditions where space and weight were at a premium. It therefore became essential for the fur traders to find local sources of salt, among many other resources, to supply their trading posts and to supplement the small amounts that could be transported inland from the bay. Fortunately, salt plains — saline environments fed by underground springs — are a natural phenomenon in the karst landscape surrounding Lake Athabasca and the nearby Slave River, in what is now northeastern Alberta. The springs carry the mineral from subterranean deposits. At the surface, the water pools and evaporates, leaving behind an accumulation of salt.

A magnified view of a salt crystal.

The earliest recorded reference to salt deposits in the Slave River area is the Moses Norton map of 1760. From 1762 to 1773 Norton was the Chief Factor at the HBC's Prince of Wales Fort on Hudson Bay near present-day Churchill,

LEFT: ISTOCK. OPPOSITE PAGE: JOHN MCKINNON/PARKS CANADA

Salt springs and salt deposits form white patches along the treeline near the Salt Plains lookout in Wood Buffalo National Park, Alberta.

Above: A natural salt deposit in Wood Buffalo National Park, Alberta.

Left: A 1760 map by HBC Chief Factor Moses Norton indicates salt deposits near "ye Northern Ind'n Lake" (Lake Athabasca).

Manitoba. He based his map on information from Dene traders who had travelled a thousand kilometres overland from the Slave River area to the fort. Norton's map is a gathering of information about a very distant land, including a reference to salt in the Lake Athabasca area.

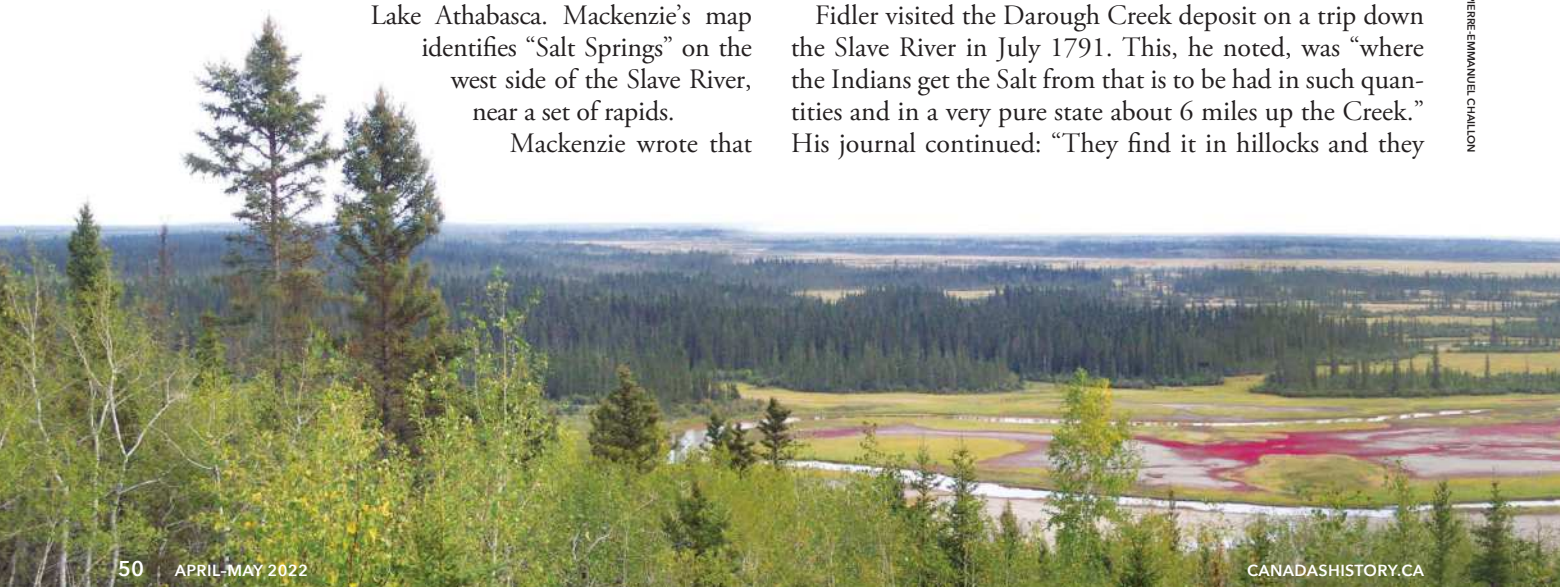
It wasn't until nearly thirty years later that explorers visited and noted the salt deposits in this area. The salt deposit near Darough Creek, a tributary of the Slave River, is the first one known to have been seen by Canadians of European descent and appears on a map in Alexander Mackenzie's published journal of his 1789 trip to the Arctic Ocean and his 1793 overland trek to the Pacific coast. Mackenzie was a fur trader employed by the North West Company and was based on Lake Athabasca. Mackenzie's map identifies "Salt Springs" on the west side of the Slave River, near a set of rapids.

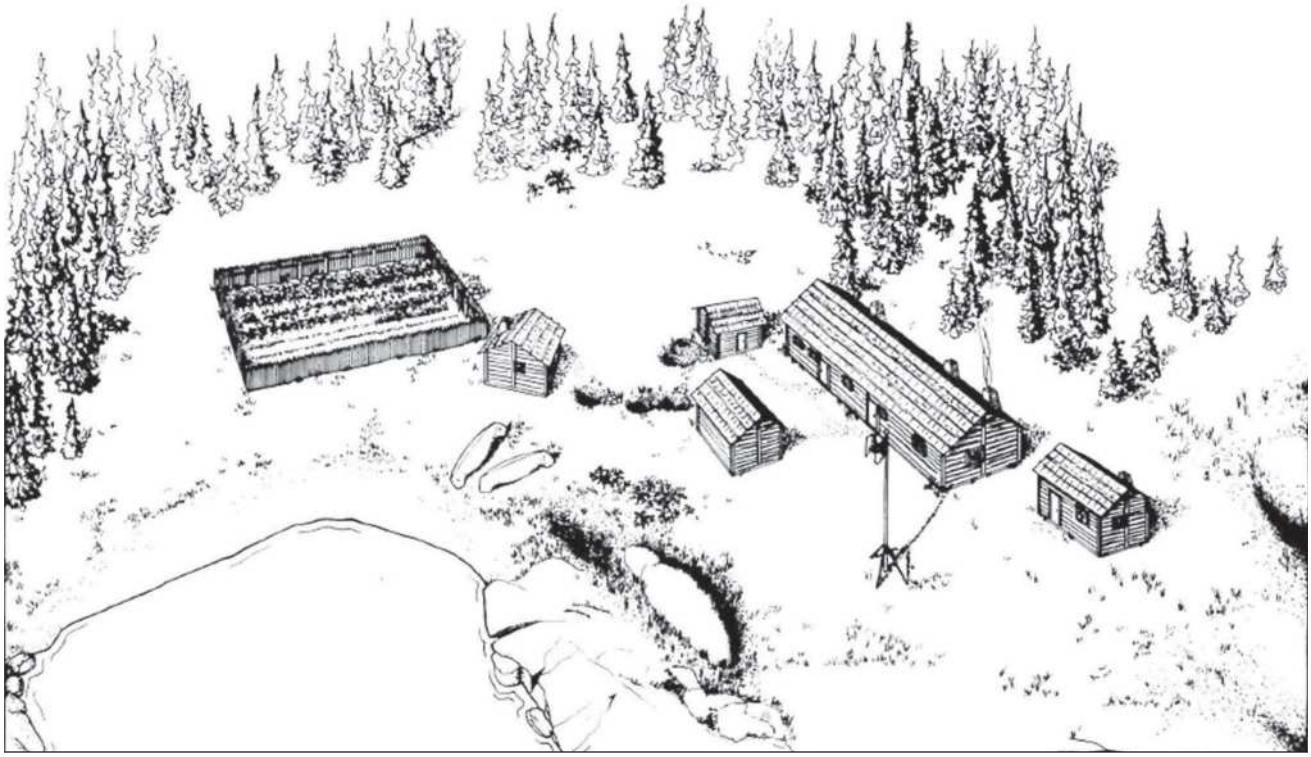
Mackenzie wrote that salt was present in the country and that it was used as an article of trade by Indigenous traders. Bemoaning the staple diet of whitefish and pemmican for North West Company traders on Lake Athabasca, Mackenzie wrote: "Thus do the voyageurs live, year after year, entirely upon fish, without even the quickening flavour of salt, or the variety of any farinaceous root or vegetable. Salt, however, if their habits had not rendered it unnecessary, might be obtained in this country to the Westward of the Peace River, where it loses its name in that of the Slave River, from the numerous salt-ponds and springs to be found there, which will supply in any quantity, in a state of concretion, and perfectly white and clean. When the Indians pass that way they bring a small quantity to the fort, with other articles of traffic."

From 1790 to 1792, HBC surveyor Philip Turnor and map-maker and fur trader Peter Fidler travelled to Lake Athabasca to assess the work of independent traders and the potential for an HBC trading post. Fidler returned to Lake Athabasca in 1802 to establish a presence for the Hudson's Bay Company. He founded Nottingham House before leaving the area in 1806. Turnor and Fidler's arrival provides historians with the first detailed documenting of salt and its use in the Lake Athabasca trade.

Fidler visited the Darough Creek deposit on a trip down the Slave River in July 1791. This, he noted, was "where the Indians get the Salt from that is to be had in such quantities and in a very pure state about 6 miles up the Creek." His journal continued: "They find it in hillocks and they

TOP LEFT: HBC ARCHIVES A-1760. TOP RIGHT: PIERRE-EMMANUEL CHAILLON





A sketch made in the 1970s by artist Dorothea Kappler shows the probable appearance of the HBC trading post Nottingham House, on Lake Athabasca, in September 1805. The sketch is part of archaeologist Karlis Karklins's 1979 report on his excavations of the site.

say that when they have taken a good quantity from the top of one of these hillocks & made a kind of an hollow the next year it will again be quite filled up with as pure fine white Salt as before."

Other than as an item of trade, little is yet known of the particular uses of salt by Indigenous peoples. We do know that salt was used by fur traders as a condiment and for preserving some foods. Turnor wrote in his journal on July 6, 1791, that he had "used of it and have eat meat cured with it and think it very good." This is the first reference we have to the use of salt for preserving meat in the Athabasca region.

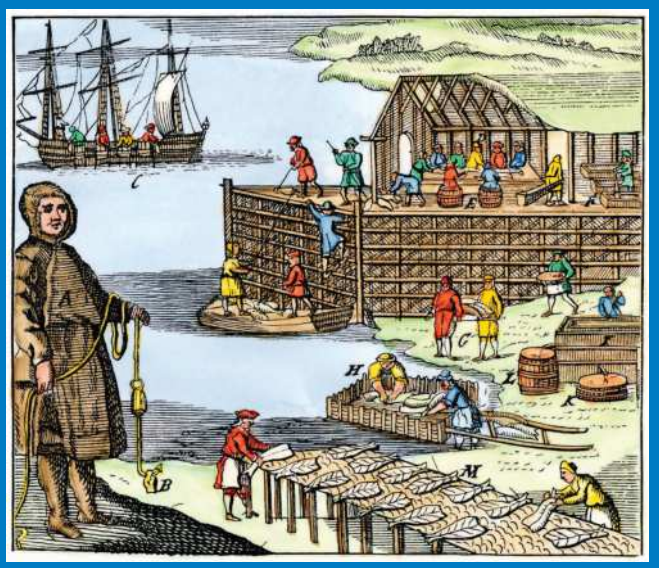
In his final journal entries before leaving Lake Athabasca, Turnor summarized the existing resource potential to support the Athabasca trade. Among other things, Turnor noted, "this lake is an exceeding fine place for Geese in the fall of the year at which time great numbers might be cured for the winter as they are then killed setting as they come to the sands at the rate of two or three at a shot. And they keep flying backwards and forwards the whole day as there is no tide to cover the sands. And that material article salt is very plenty at this place, the Indians bringing great quantities of it which they trade at a very easy rate."

We get further information about the use of salt from Fidler's 1803–05 Nottingham House post journals. Fidler was in charge of the post, which was the first official trading venture of the Hudson's Bay Company on Lake Athabasca. He clarified that the HBC traders did not rely entirely on trade to provide them with salt; they also collected salt to supplement the small supply they brought inland from the HBC post on Hudson Bay. On Tuesday, October 23, 1804, Fidler wrote: "William Henry & Courtney went away down Slave river in 2 Canoes to where the Salt is found above the rapids."

As a preservative, salt was primarily used for salting ducks and geese. There are several references in Fidler's journal to "salting a keg of geese." Salted fowl appears to have been a treat, as on December 28, 1803, it was recorded that the men posted at the fishing nets received, along with some rum and turnips, "1 ½ Salt Geese and a bit of fresh and a bit of dry meat." For a New Year's treat in 1804, the fishermen

TOP: KARLIS KARKLINS. BOTTOM: PARKS CANADA

The Salt Plains and surrounding forest in Wood Buffalo National Park, Alberta.



An illustration of Newfoundland fishermen drying and salting cod in the1700s.

ROCK OF AGES

There is an old folk tale in which a king asks his three daughters how much they love him. The two eldest reply, "as much as bread" and "as much as wine." The youngest replies, "as much as salt." She is banished for her rudeness – that is, until later in the story, when the king is given a saltless meal. Despising the bland food, he finally recognizes the value of his youngest daughter's love.

Humans need salt to survive. Throughout history salt has been a medicine and a condiment, and it may also have served spiritual purposes. With the emergence of sedentary populations and the advent of animal husbandry and agriculture, salt acquired a renewed purpose as a preservative for meats, fish, cheese, and vegetables.

When raw meat is coated with coarse salt, the salt draws the moisture out of the meat, leaving it dehydrated and limiting the environment in which harmful bacteria can grow. Because salted meat can be stored for future use, it created food surpluses that became the foundation of powerful empires. From the twelfth through the fourteenth centuries, Venice built an international economy based on a monopoly on the production and trade of salt throughout the Mediterranean.

In the fifteenth century, European fishermen began fishing for cod in the waters surrounding Newfoundland. They salted the fish to preserve it for transport and for sale in Europe. The salt-cod fishery remained a mainstay of the island's economy through the nineteenth century.

When the British ruled India, the *Salt Act* of 1882 prohibited Indians from collecting or selling salt, instead forcing them to buy it from their British rulers and imposing an onerous salt tax. In an act of civil disobedience in 1930, Mohandas Gandhi led thousands of Indians on a march to the coastal town of Dandi on the Arabian Sea to collect salt from sea water, defying the British law and fanning the flames of the Indian independence movement. – *Patrick Carroll*

received "3 Salt geese — 2 ducks 30 lbs of Dry Meat 1 bladder of fatt 15 lb of fresh meat — ¼ Chocolate & ½ of Tea — 1.2 of Spices — 6 rabbits, 6 partridges & 2 lb of bacon also about 4 [gallons] of turnip & Potatoes 1 Quart high spirit & 1 pint of rum & 1 quart of butter."

Red meat — or fresh meat, as it is called in the journals — was primarily moose or bison and was not commonly salted. It would be kept frozen if procured during the winter, although, being unsalted, there was always the chance of it going bad. "1803 November 1. Washed the little fresh meat we have as it was become mouldy," Fidler's journal recorded. The fact that Fidler made only one reference to salted red meat suggested that it was more a delicacy than a staple part of the diet: "1804, September 27, Thursday.… Salted a keg of Moosemeat. Ribs. Belly Piece — and the meat of the rump." Red meat was most commonly dried or beaten and mixed into pemmican, both of which were more effective means of preservation and reduced the weight of the meat for travel when it was being supplied by Indigenous traders.

Fidler's Nottingham House journal provides a glimpse into the HBC's adaptation to a business model based on inland trading posts. Procuring the resources necessary to support the post — through trade and through the efforts of post employees — and limiting the amount and cost of provisions to be imported would be key to the company's economic success. Unfortunately, inland trade initially proved too competitive for the Hudson's Bay Company, and it wasn't until its amalgamation with the North West Company in 1821 that the HBC was able to exert control over Lake Athabasca and expand its reach further north into the Mackenzie region.

A prelude to this expansion is a sketch on the end board of Fidler's 1803–05 Nottingham House journal. The drawing shows an extensive salt deposit on the Salt River, downriver from the rapids on the Slave River. These deposits were known to Indigenous peoples. Oral history tells us the Dene would travel three hundred kilometres from Yellowknife to collect salt, then return six hundred kilometres north to Contwoyto Lake in modern-day Nunavut, where they would trade it with the Inuit. These deposits later became the primary salt source for northern trade and early settlement, control being transferred by the HBC to the Métis patriarch François Beaulieu in the 1840s when he established the community of Salt River, in what is now the Northwest Territories. The valuable deposits later became part of the Roman Catholic mission operations based in Fort Smith, Northwest Territories.

Late nineteenth-century efforts by the Canadian government to increase settlement on the prairies led to the development of industrial salt mining in the south that proved, ultimately, a more economical and productive way to serve the Western Canadian market. Transportation infrastructure eventually developed to supply the southern product to settlements in the North. The deposits on the Slave River, once again on the periphery of the nation's consciousness, reverted to their status as geological anomalies in what is now Wood Buffalo National Park.

ALAMY

Visitors standing on the Dufferin Terrace outside the Château Frontenac hotel in Quebec City look down through an "archeoscope" that provides a window to the Saint-Louis Forts and Châteaux National Historic Site.

Descending to the past

A unique archaeological site beneath Quebec City's Dufferin Terrace highlights centuries of changing occupation and uses. *by Nancy Payne*

When our family last visited Quebec City in 2009, the area at the base of the ridiculously photogenic Château Frontenac hotel was, to be honest, kind of a mess. It was an interesting mess, though: Parks Canada staff were excavating a sizable spot just south of the famous statue of French explorer Samuel de Champlain, revealing partial stone walls and foundations.

This time, though, with our two sons away at university, it's just my husband and I who are visiting. For once we've made no plans and have done virtually no research about this getaway, beyond booking a hotel inside the walls of Old Quebec. We know that we can walk everywhere from our lodging — and that everywhere we walk will be both beautiful and positively drenched in history.

I'm looking forward to once again strolling along the famous Dufferin Terrace (no matter how casually I'm dressed, in my mind I'm wearing an outfit that involves a bustle and a multitude of complicated buttons and I'm carrying a matching parasol) when I wonder what ever became of that dig we saw more than a decade ago? When we take our first walk on the clifftop terrace, we see the first clue to the site's evolution: Three big glass boxes called "archeoscopes" offer tantalizing glimpses of displays and passageways that are right under our feet. It turns out that the mess of thirteen years ago is now part of a National Historic Site offering a literal descent into this storied location on Cap Diamant.

After we pick up tickets — a bargain at less than five dollars per adult — in the pretty Frontenac kiosk, cheerful bilingual staffers direct us to the entrance stairs. As soon as we enter, we're captivated by the feeling that we are, quite literally, walking where Huron-Wendat

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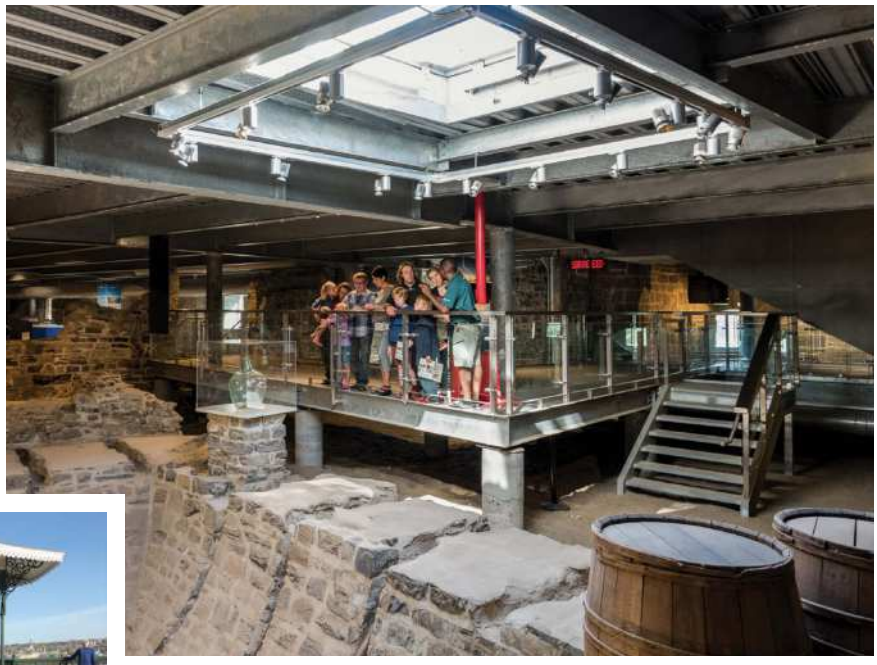


Top left: The Château Frontenac hotel sits atop Cap Diamant in Quebec City.

Top right: Visitors observe the icebox located near the entrance to the Saint-Louis Forts and Châteaux National Historic Site.

Above: An archeoscope on the Dufferin Terrace is near the Lorne kiosk, which is one of the entrances to the National Historic Site.

Right: A Parks Canada guide leads visitors through the site.

chiefs, British governors, and Champlain himself previously trod. Well, they and a whole bunch of servants, too.

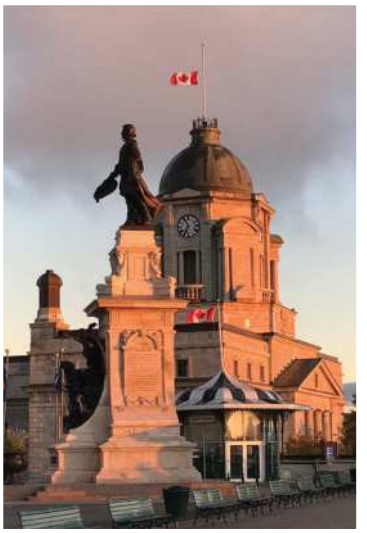
Over the course of centuries, the site evolved from a First Nations meeting place where chiefs such as Jean-Baptiste Atironta welcomed European newcomers to a seat of power complete with the trappings of an imperial outpost. Small, well-lit display cases highlight evocative artifacts that help to tell the story of the site's four forts and two châteaux: glass trade beads, a decorative gold pin, European and Huron-Wendat pipe fragments, and delicate china and glassware that seem disproportionately fancy for the rough-hewn surroundings.

We haven't bothered to download the Parks Canada app's audio guide, preferring to poke around at our own pace. Signs explain the original purposes of the rooms that we enter.

Given its vantage point high above the St. Lawrence River, it's not surprising that there was already a Huron-Wendat village here when Champlain built the first wooden fort and palisade in 1620, before expanding it six years later. (He died on this spot in 1635.) The fort's third version took twenty-four years and added stone to the ramparts. A fourth variation enhanced the fort's defensive capabilities, but after the British captured Quebec its military role was superseded by a new nearby citadel that now serves as the secondary residence of Canada's Governor General.

The first of the two châteaux was a single-storey stone structure built by French Governor Charles Huault de Montmagny in 1648. The second rose during the time of his successor, Louis de Buade, Comte de Frontenac, and was ultimately taken over by the British. The many structures that have occupied the

TOP LEFT: NANCY PAYNE. TOP RIGHT: © PARKS CANADA. LOWER LEFT: NANCY PAYNE. LOWER RIGHT: © PARKS CANADA



Far left: Visitors pass stone walls and foundations in 2010 at the Saint-Louis Forts and Châteaux National Historic Site in Quebec City.

Top left: The monument to Samuel de Champlain.

Lower left: The architecture of Quebec City's Gare du Palais train station resembles the Château Frontenac hotel.

site are reflected in the plurals of the official name: Saint-Louis Forts and Châteaux National Historic Site. For good measure, there have been several incarnations of the promenade initiated in 1838 by Lord Durham and then greatly expanded during Lord Dufferin's tenure as Governor General in the 1870s.

To be honest, we don't worry too much about the provenance of the rooms and passageways as we explore them. We're too absorbed in the tidbits of information on offer about Atironta's diplomatic skills and about the complexities of colonial food preparation; apparently, Frontenac had a personal confectioner whose specialty was preparing the governor's beloved sorbets.

Partly because of its unique setting, and partly because hundreds of tourists are wandering just a few metres overhead, the site has a kind of pleasant hush about it. Its spotlighted architectural and historical features are easy to take in at an unhurried pace, and visitors' conversations are low. The whole site evokes a feeling of having made a discovery that required us only to descend a few stairs in order to be transported to another time.

We climb back up to the terrace, emerging into the sunny afternoon amidst visitors eating ice cream, taking photos, and marvelling at the view as generations before them have done. We spent perhaps forty-five minutes in that other time, and, glad as we are to be back in an era of peace and convenience, we're equally glad that we now know a little more about how this remarkable place came to be.

IF YOU GO

WHEN TO VISIT: The archaeological crypt at the Saint-Louis Forts and Châteaux National Historic Site is open seasonally. Check with Parks Canada for precise dates.

GETTING THERE: Do yourself a favour and arrive by train in Quebec City if you possibly can. Not only is it a relatively relaxing trip, but you don't have to worry about navigating the narrow streets of Old Quebec or finding parking. As a bonus, you'll arrive at and depart from the beautiful Gare du Palais, which echoes the appearance of the Château Frontenac.

WHERE TO STAY: Besides the fabled château and a few other large hotels, there are myriad charming smaller accommodations inside the city walls; many of them include breakfast with your stay. We enjoyed our time at the lovely and reasonably priced Hôtel Cap Diamant on quiet avenue Sainte-Geneviève.

EXPLORE: Everywhere you turn in Old Quebec, history beckons. Walk the Plains of Abraham, visit the Musée Royal 22e Régiment, explore the province's history at the Musée de la civilisation, or just wander around reading the numerous commemorative plaques. For an unparalleled view, take the short ferry ride to Lévis and back.

BRING: Be sure to pack comfortable shoes for all that walking and a good book — or history magazine! — to read in the plentiful parks.

LEFT: ALAMY CJ GMD. TOP RIGHT AND LOWER RIGHT: NANCY PAYNE

AT THE MUSEUMS

Above: *Kanata*, by Robert Houle, 1992.

Left: *Sandy Bay*, by Robert Houle, 1998–99.

Below: *Red is Beautiful*, by Robert Houle, 1970.

An exhibition of works by Robert Houle is at the Art Gallery of Ontario in Toronto before travelling to galleries in Calgary and Winnipeg. *Robert Houle: Red is Beautiful* is a career retrospective of the 1947-born Salteaux Anishinabe artist, writer, and curator that includes more than one hundred pieces made over the past fifty years.

Houle has long advocated for Indigenous art's inclusion as part of contemporary culture and has curated groundbreaking exhibitions of contemporary Indigenous art. His own creative work brings modern art currents such as abstraction and conceptualism together with Indigenous aesthetics and histories.

Works in the show range from small drawings to monumental paintings and large installations. Among them, the titular *Red is Beautiful* (1970) was the first work sold by Houle to a museum – the Canadian Museum of History (known in 1970 as the Museum of Man). At the time, "he was exploring the work of abstract expressionists," according to curator Wanda Nanibush, "and was drawn to the way artists like Barnett Newman strove to understand the spiritual aspect of abstraction." However, she notes that Houle's painting draws upon not only his interest in modernist uses of colour but also his involvement with Indigenous "cultural renaissance and political resistance."

Houle's attention to Indigenous and Canadian history is evident in works such as *Kanata* (1992), which is a kind of retelling of the 1770 Benjamin West painting *The Death of General Wolfe*. Meanwhile, *Sandy Bay* (1998–99) includes five panels that move from documentary photographs to painterly abstraction and draw from Houle's experience of attending the residential school in his northern-Manitoba community.

Robert Houle: Red is Beautiful continues at the AGO until April 24 and will be at Contemporary Calgary from June 23 to September 18. Winnipeg dates are to be announced.

TOP: NATIONAL GALLERY OF CANADA, OTTAWA. PURCHASED 1994. © ROBERT HOULE. LOWER LEFT: COLLECTION OF THE WINNIPEG ART GALLERY. © ROBERT HOULE. PHOTO BY ERNEST MAYER. LOWER RIGHT: CANADIAN MUSEUM OF HISTORY, V-F-174. © ROBERT HOULE

The McCord Museum in Montreal is staging the exhibition *Parachute: Subversive Fashion of the '80s*, which presents some sixty outfits from the visionary fashion brand started in 1977 by British clothing designer Nicola Pelly and American architect and urban planner Harry Parnass. The two met while working for Montreal-based fashion retailer Le Château and went on to clothe music stars including David Bowie, Madonna, Michael Jackson, Peter Gabriel, and members of Duran Duran.

According to curator Alexis Walker, "Parnass and Pelly lucratively commodified cool urban life at the dawn of the digital age." Parachute concept stores in Montreal, New York, and Los Angeles featured a high-tech industrial aesthetic and served as unique public spaces. "We saw our clientele as modern-day heroes and heroines, independent beings in control of their destinies, fighting against conformism and homogeneity," said Pelly. The exhibition, which also features sketches, advertisements, videos, and a music soundtrack, continues to April 24.

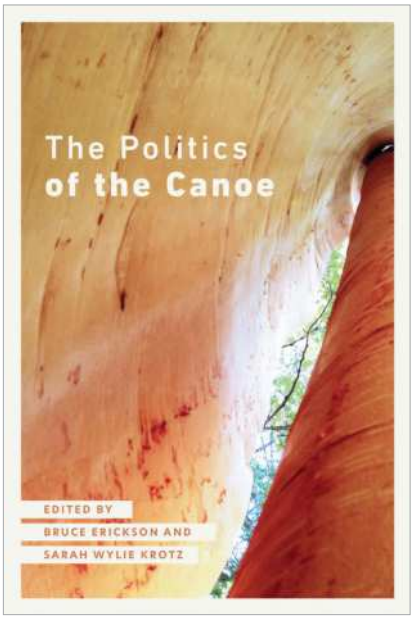
Top right: Photograph by Jean-Claude Lussier from a fashion show created by Dick Walsh at Montreal's Limelight nightclub, March 5, 1979.

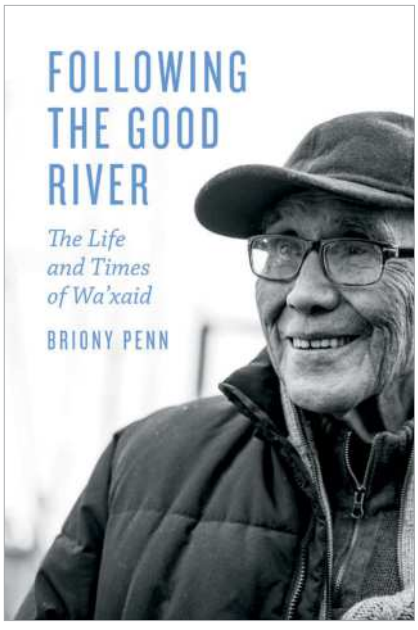
Centre right: Models in early Parachute designs, photographed for *Forces* magazine by Andrée Gagné, circa 1980.

An exhibition at the Remai Modern in Saskatoon explores the legacy of the canoe as a means of transportation, a method of carrying forward cultural knowledge, and an icon of Canadian culture. While reflecting Indigenous traditions, uses for colonization, and general appreciation of the vessel through historical and contemporary art, the exhibition *Canoe* also shows how the vessels can be works of art in themselves. Pieces by Indigenous artists such as Inuit sculptor and printmaker Joe Talirunili and master canoe maker Pinock Smith are presented along with art by painters who include Frances Anne Hopkins, Cornelius Krieghoff, and Lucius O'Brien. The exhibition runs until May 8.

The Migration, by Joe Talirunili, circa 1975, grey soapstone, wood, sealskin, string.

TOP RIGHT: LENT TO MCCORD MUSEUM BY DICK WALSH. CENTRE RIGHT: LENT TO MCCORD MUSEUM BY NICOLA PELLY. © ANDRÉE GAGNÉ. BOTTOM: THE MCCREATH CANOE COLLECTION





HEART OF CULTURE

The Politics of the Canoe

edited by Bruce Erickson and Sarah Wylie Krotz
University of Manitoba Press, 268 pages, $27.95

Following the Good River: The Life and Times of Wa'xaid

by Briony Penn, with Cecil Paul
Rocky Mountain Books, 387 pages, $38

For me, the words "politics" and "canoe" don't go together. Who wants to think grimy thoughts of politics whilst gliding across a calm lake on the Canadian Shield, as the cries of loons echo over the water? But then there is the iconic image of a buckskin-clad prime minister, Pierre Trudeau, paddling a cedar strip canoe in the Yukon; and his son Justin later did the same. What does it all mean?

Canoe has "Canadiana" written all over it. It's as much a symbol of Canada as maple syrup, maple leaves, and Mounties. It even has sexual connotations — "canoodling" — that are unique to this country. When we settlers who are canoe trippers go out on our annual multi-day wilderness paddles in our lightweight Kevlar boats, we might imagine ourselves as people of an earlier time — voyageurs, explorers, fur traders — making brave forays into unknown, untravelled territory. A happy fantasy to be sure, but not so harmless when considering who it leaves out. Maybe in this time of reconciliation it's worth looking at how we've colonized the canoe. When we dip our paddles, we touch into something far deeper than we realize.

The academic essays in *The Politics of the Canoe* look at canoe culture from a mostly Indigenous perspective. And that perspective is radically different. For instance, for people like me, a canoe is a commodity. Obtaining one involves a trip to the store. It's a casual "thing" we use for our pleasure.

Contrast that with the traditional view of the Chinook and other Pacific Northwest people. The old-growth trees out of which their canoes are formed are the source of each canoe's spirit. "Our canoes aren't empty vessels that we simply use to travel," writes Rachel Cushman. "They are members of our family. They have names. They have hearts."

In recent years, there has been a resurgence in the building and use of traditional ocean-going canoes in the Pacific Northwest. The whole process of harvesting materials for the vessels, then building and launching them, is a community-wide effort steeped in tradition, prayer, and healing journeys. Indigenous communities along the coast have reclaimed their heritage by organizing cultural canoe gatherings that include as many as three thousand participants.

In Algonquin culture in eastern Canada, the birchbark canoe occupies a similar place. A canoe is part of *ginawaydaganuc*, the Algonquin law of interconnection, and making one requires four sources of intelligence: emotional, physical, spiritual, and mental. "Emotionally, a person cannot be in a state of anger to work on a canoe, because the anger will show through in the work," write the co-authors of one of the essays.

Not all of the essays are about Indigenous experience. One recounts Don Starkell's incredible journey by canoe from Winnipeg, beginning in June 1980, to the mouth of the Amazon River in Brazil. His amazing feat, in which he and his sons were roughed up more by people than by nature, has received little scholarly attention. Writer Albert Braz attributes that to Starkell's working-class identity and his lack of wilderness ideology. "The literature on canoeing … tends to be rather genteel, focusing extensively on affluent and environmentally conscious individuals."

The book *Following the Good River: The Life and Times of Wa'xaid* is filled with just such individuals. They rallied behind a Xenaksiala Elder's successful effort to save British Columbia's vast Kitlope Valley rain forest from industrial development.

This book is a biography of Elder Cecil Paul and follows an earlier volume by its author, Briony Penn, entitled *Stories From the Magic Canoe of Wa'xaid*. As Paul explains, "It is a magical canoe because there is room for everyone who wants to come into it to paddle together. The currents against it are very strong, but I believe we can reach that destination, and this is the reason for our survival."

The early life of Paul, also known as Wa'xaid, is sadly all too familiar. Authorities snatched him from his family when he was a child and placed him in a resi-

dential school, where he was abused. As a young man, he was jailed for sitting in the white section of a segregated theatre in Vancouver. After three decades lost in addiction, Paul found his way back to his ancestral home, along the glacial waters of Kitlope Lake, where his healing journey began.

Alarmed to discover road survey markers on his family's homestead (an indication that clear-cut logging would soon commence), Paul felt moved to save the land. When he told his wife, Mae, that it might mean he would lose his logging job and that the family might lose their house, she replied: "No, you go ahead. I'll walk with you."

"That is all I wanted to hear: 'I'll walk with you,'" said Paul. In the end, powerful individuals, non-profits, and corporations such as Patagonia also walked with Paul.

Following the Good River is a meander through a collection of stories, time periods, events, and voices. The best parts are told in Paul's own, natural storytelling voice, and it's advisable not to be in a hurry to get through the book, as you might miss the subtle undercurrent of wisdom that moves the story along.

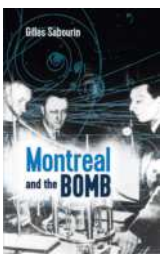
On December 3, 2020, at age ninety, Cecil Paul passed away. Surviving him are his family and Kitlope, the largest temperate rain forest on the planet.

Reviewed by **Nelle Oosterom**, a contributing editor for *Canada's History* magazine. She lives in Winnipeg on Treaty One territory.

NUCLEAR TENSIONS

Montreal and the Bomb

by Gilles Sabourin
Baraka Books, 208 pages, $29.95



Most people have heard of the Manhattan Project, the Second World War American research endeavour aimed at building the world's first nuclear bomb. But few may know of the parallel efforts that took place in Canada at the same time. In *Montreal and the Bomb*, author Gilles Sabourin describes the work, lives, conflicts, discoveries, and intrigues of the unlikely team of scientists — mainly European emigrés, bolstered by some local Canadian recruits — who assembled in the newly built Montreal Laboratory of the Université de Montréal in 1942 to attempt to unlock the secrets of nuclear fission.

Sabourin, a nuclear engineer who specializes in power-plant safety, has a deep understanding of the scientific aspects of his subject matter. To fill in the human aspect, he tracked down and interviewed some of the surviving members of the Montreal Laboratory, including chemist Alma Chackett and computer Joan Wilkie-Heal (one of the people who performed the complex calculations required for the project). He also spoke with dozens of descendants of the laboratory's scientists, who shared precious documents and photographs, including the diary of the laboratory's first director, Hans Halban. Rounding it all out with archival research in Britain and Canada, Sabourin spent a total of fifteen years bringing together the material to write this fascinating and informative book.

The story interweaves several threads, as it recounts the events taking place in Montreal while war raged across the ocean in Europe. On the scientific front, Sabourin describes the difficulties involved in procuring and handling the rare and dangerous radioactive elements that the physicists, chemists, engineers, and mathematicians at the Montreal Laboratory required for their experiments aimed at understanding the nature of the atom. His book takes us deep into the labs where the scientists probed the secrets of uranium-235 and plutonium-239, seeking, at first, to build a bomb and later to harness nuclear energy for peaceful power generation.

In one early example of scientific derring-do, Sabourin recounts how Halban, prior to coming to Canada, was forced to flee France ahead of the invading German forces. The scientist, who at the time was working at the Curie Institute in Paris, was instructed by the French government to smuggle the country's entire supply of 185 kilograms of heavy water, used in nuclear reactions, to safety with him across the English Channel. But, when Halban and French Army Lieutenant Jacques Allier attempted to retrieve the barrels of heavy water, which had been hidden from the Nazis in a prison in Riom, France, the prison guard refused to hand them over. "Allier had to threaten the man with a drawn revolver before he would give them up," Sabourin recounts.

On the human front, the book describes the power struggles, personal conflicts, and, sometimes, love affairs that roiled the laboratory and formed an emotional undercurrent to the participants' scientific work. Finally, on the political front, Sabourin delves into the tensions that existed among the Allied nations — the United States, Great Britain, France, and the Soviet Union — as they sought to work together to defeat their common enemies yet also competed with each other in the race to develop nuclear weapons. In the chapter entitled "A Den of Espionage," Sabourin describes how the British physicist and Communist sympathizer Alan Nunn May used his position at the Montreal Laboratory to pass on nuclear secrets to the Russians.

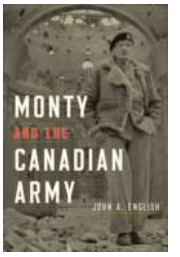
This book will appeal to readers interested in the history of science and to those fascinated by the politics of the Second World War and the Cold War that followed it.

Reviewed by **Kate Jaimet**, the senior editor of *Canada's History* magazine.

ART OF COMMAND

Monty and the Canadian Army

by John A. English
University of Toronto Press,
367 pages, $39.95



Field Marshal Bernard Law Montgomery was loved by British and Canadian soldiers but despised by American generals. Canadian senior commanders also had a very uneasy relationship with him. Monty, as he was

widely known, was a divisive figure in the Allied ground war against Germany in the Mediterranean and northwest Europe during the Second World War, although he often had to preen and bark to be heard amid the noise that accompanied the expanding American military influence from D-Day onward.

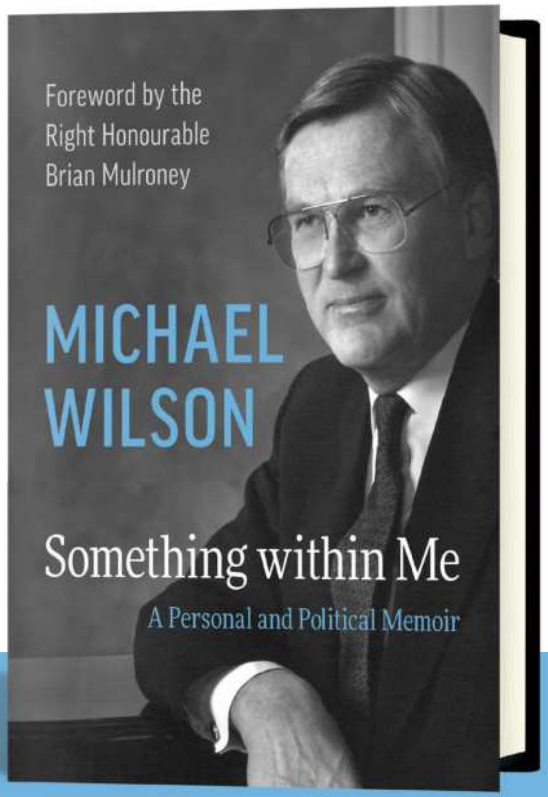
In *Monty and the Canadian Army*, John A. English, a former officer in the Canadian Forces and the author of several books of military history, explores Montgomery's interactions with the Canadian military. This is well-trod ground, some of it explored in previous books by English, although he offers some fascinating new insights into the always complex and at times eccentric British general. Monty was a great trainer of men for battle and was absolutely ruthless in his appraisal of both rank-and-file soldiers and commanders. He never blamed the former but was quick to dismiss any officer who did not live up to his own high standards.

Monty was hard on the first Canadian senior army commander of the Second World War, Andrew McNaughton. A veteran of the Great War, McNaughton had a brilliant, scientific mind, and he was a charismatic leader; yet he had faltered in a number of key training operations in England. Monty (and others) felt he was not up for commanding high-level formations consisting of tens of thousands of soldiers, armoured vehicles, and support units. It was not an entirely fair assessment, since these operations were meant to *train* officers and men; but Monty made his judgment.

McNaughton's case was not made easier, as he was actively being undermined by his subordinate, Harry Crerar. Even though McNaughton famously claimed that the Canadian army was a "dagger pointed at the heart of Berlin," he was eventually done in by a knife in the back from Crerar and others. Monty, however, felt that Crerar was not much better than McNaughton, complaining that he was a better desk general than field commander.

English follows Montgomery through his major campaigns and carefully orchestrated battles in North Africa in 1942 against his arch-enemy German General Erwin Rommel, as well as his commanding of ground forces in July 1943 in Sicily, where he antagonized the Americans. But the focus of the book is upon the many campaigns to liberate Western Europe. In these titanic battles, there was no shortage of victories for Monty — although English is too sympathetic regarding the general's gross failure to support Canadian fighting forces during the Battle of Scheldt to free the essential port of Antwerp in Belgium. Nonetheless, throughout the book English offers keen insight into Montgom-

Available May 2022 from Aevo UTP



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ery's approach to battle, his quarrelsome personality, and the art of command.

My most significant criticism is directed at English's high-level focus on the many internecine Allied clashes between Monty and the Americans, as well as with McNaughton, Crerar, and almost every other senior general, whether friend or foe. While the senior Canadian generals were indeed weaker than most of their British or American counterparts, readers gain very little understanding into why the Canadian formations were as effective as they were.

With English's gaze on the conflicts between the generals, he misses an opportunity to explore the impact of the able mid-level Canadian commanders, including those at the division level and especially at the brigade and regimental levels. It was these combat officers who led the way to victory, although they, too, were deeply impressed with Monty's forceful personality and skilled generalship.

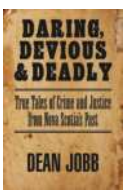
Reviewed by **Tim Cook**, the author of several books, including *The Secret History of Soldiers* (2018) and *The Fight for History* (2020).

MORE BOOKS

Daring, Devious and Deadly: True Tales of Crime and Justice from Nova Scotia's Past

by Dean Jobb

Pottersfield Press, 213 pages, $21.95



Prolific true-crime author Dean Jobb is back with more stories from Nova Scotia's past.

Daring, Devious and Deadly is a collection of fifteen episodes and is organized by themes, which is something I thoroughly appreciated. That allowed me to jump to Victorian horrors at my first sitting, then I made my way through disorderly courts and deadly disasters, before I finished with baffling bank heists and maritime mayhem.

My favourite story was "Three-ring Robbery," about an 1876 bank heist that happened when P.T. Barnum's famous circus came to Halifax for the first time. I also found both "Tell-tale Chalk" and "An Affair of Honour" quite gripping — the first speaks to the insatiable greed of certain assailants, the second to a perfect storm of classism, moral ambiguity, and the strict sexual mores of the mid-1800s.

TIES THAT BIND The Canadian Pacific Railway has been a key means of transportation for goods and people as well as one of the country's iconic companies. The book *Railway Nation: Tales of Canadian Pacific, the World's Greatest Travel System*, by former CPR employee and archivist David Laurence Jones (Heritage House, 304 pages, $34.95), includes dozens of stories, colourful promotional images, and numerous photographs of railway equipment, hotels, celebrities, and ordinary Canadians taken from the author's own collection and from other sources. The top image shows a line of CPR messenger boys standing proudly beside their delivery bicycles outside the Canadian Pacific Telegraph office in Edmonton, while a few trainees stand behind them. The lower image shows women dining aboard the CPR's transcontinental passenger train, the Trans-Canada Limited, in 1924.

TOP: PUBLIC DOMAIN, COURTESY OF LIBRARIES AND CULTURAL RESOURCES DIGITAL COLLECTIONS, UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY (CU156037); BY MCDERMID STUDIO, LOWER: DAVID LAURENCE JONES

Different types of images accompany the stories and help to humanize some of the characters. Unfortunately — and not surprisingly, given the era in which the events took place — the images mostly portray members of the elites, such as lawyers, judges, and politicians.

Daring, Devious & Deadly also includes a list of source material for readers who may wish to dig deeper into the details of any particular story. It's a perfect read for anyone looking for digestible and entertaining episodes. — *Tanja Hütter*

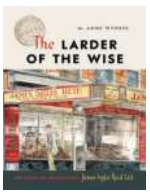
Flying to Extremes: Memories of a Northern Bush Pilot
by Dominique Prinet
Hancock House, 280 pages, $24.95

Flying to Extremes is an exciting recounting of Dominique Prinet's time as a bush pilot in the Northwest Territories from the late 1960s into the 1970s. The book contains his accounts of perilous takeoffs and landings, treacherous journeys into the frozen North, and tales of local legends. Those tales include the story behind the name "Rapids of the Drowned," near Thebacha, N.W.T., where five men perished in 1786 due to a miscommunication over the safety of the rapids.

Prinet's memoir is a kind of time capsule — readers come to understand what life was like in Yellowknife at this time, including all the dangers that came with living in the North. The book also includes vivid details of the people Prinet knew in Yellowknife, such as his landlady, Mrs. Lacombe, who regaled her tenants with stories she had acquired during her tenure.

Flying to Extremes is filled with stunning colour photographs that show the gorgeous vistas and natural beauty to be found in the territory. Those photographs complement the imagery Prinet constructs with his stories, making the book a fascinating and exciting exploration of the period. — *Julia Richards*

The Larder of the Wise: The Story of Vancouver's James Inglis Reid Ltd.
by M. Anne Wyness
Figure 1 Publishing, 192 pages, $32.99



In *The Larder of The Wise*, M. Anne Wyness, a member of the Vancouver Historical Society, takes readers through the life and times of James Inglis Reid, a Scottish immigrant who came to Canada in 1906 to seek his fame and fortune in the grocery trade. He achieved his dream by opening a butcher shop that was a much-beloved Vancouver business until its closure in 1986.

Wyness provides easy-to-follow narration, and her book includes excellent illustrations that portray the experiences of immigrants in the early twentieth century, changing consumer trends, the effects of wars upon small businesses, and, later, the fallout from the loss of the beloved establishment.

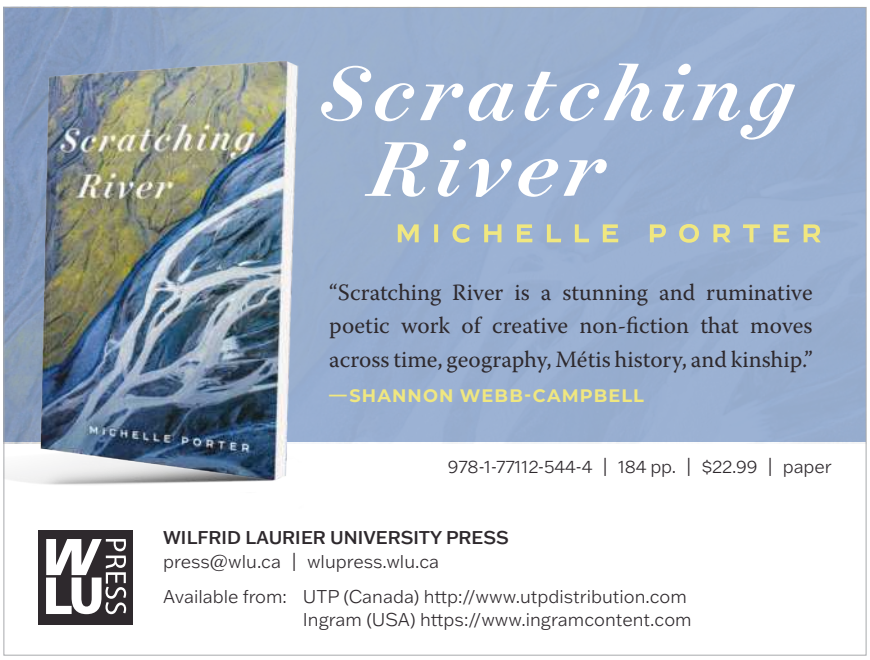
A letter to the editor published in the *Vancouver Sun* sums up Reid's store's importance to the community: "Quite apart from being an excellent butcher and baker, Reid's is a haven for those who are nostalgic for contact with the old country…. The tradition behind Reid's is an asset Vancouver cannot afford to lose."

The Larder of The Wise shows how the loss of a small historic business does not just mean losing a place to shop; it means losing all the connections the business built, the legacy it established, and the memories contained within it. — *Austin Quagleini*

Colonialism's Currency: Money, State, and First Nations in Canada, 1820–1950
by Brian Gettler
McGill-Queen's University Press,
319 pages, $37.95

In 1928, when an Indian Affairs accountant wanted to switch treaty payments from individual one-dollar bills to groups of five- and ten-dollar bills, he asserted that the Cree and Ojibwe were ignorant regarding the value of money because they did not agree to the change. In reality, their unwillingness to switch was likely because the Hudson's Bay Company would have forced the larger bills to be spent on expensive goods instead of providing change.

This account from Brian Gettler's book *Colonialism's Currency*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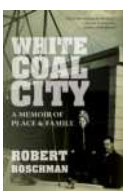
reveals the paternalistic attitude of the state towards Indigenous peoples and money. Gettler, an assistant professor of history at the University of Toronto, explores the many ways in which money has contributed to and sustained the colonial project in North America.

Drawing on examples from different geographic regions and across the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Gettler shows that currency is a useful tool for expanding territory, asserting dominance, and disciplining people who object to further colonial control.

The book is academic in tone but will prove interesting for all readers. Of particular interest is Gettler's exploration of the symbols and iconography featured on money. He explains various references made on coins and banknotes and includes fascinating photographs of historic currency. — *Henrietta Roi*

White Coal City: A Memoir of Place and Family
by Robert Boschman
University of Regina Press,
328 pages, $21.95



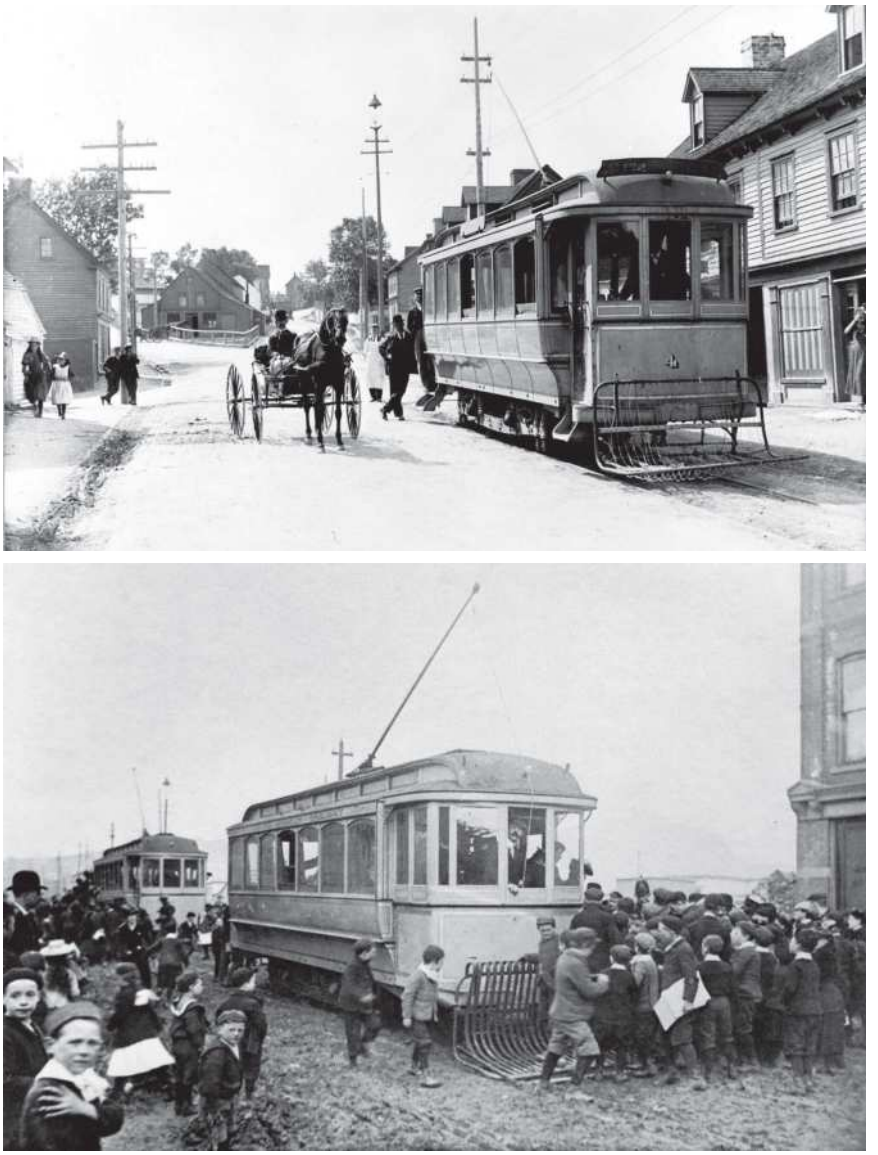
White Coal City explores the personal history of author Robert Boschman and multiple generations of his family. The story moves from rural farm life to Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, where Boschman grew up in the back of the King Koin Launderette, and it jumps between past and present.

Boschman, who is chair of the Department of English, Languages, and Cultures at Mount Royal University in Calgary, began his research for this project with old letters between his paternal grandfather John Boschman and grandmother Margaret Boschman (née Peters). A more complete picture developed as he interviewed other older family members about their own memories.

Following a tragic accident in 1940, trauma seeped through multiple generations of the family — although life had been difficult for the family even prior to this event. A large part of the memoir focuses on time spent in Prince Albert and the difficulties Robert encountered growing up there.

Boschman briefly mentions his Cree sister, who was adopted as part of the Sixties Scoop. While he writes that it is not his story to tell, it seems that his family's experience gives him some understanding of the multi-generational trauma experienced by Indigenous people due to colonialism.

This is a memoir that presents a lot of sadness, but also hope for the future, as it offers a glimpse of life in rural and small-town Canada during the twentieth century. — *Danielle Chartier*

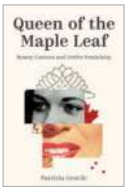


RIDE IN STYLE The two above photographs appear in *Streetcars of St. John's*, a book by Kenneth G. Pieroway (Flanker Press, 144 pages, $22.95) about the historical means of transportation in the capital city of Newfoundland and Labrador. The top image shows Streetcar No. 4 set to begin its journey along Water Street in 1910 with a horse and buggy alongside, while the lower image shows two streetcars at Water Street and Holloway on May 1, 1900 – the first day of operations for the street railway. Some prominent citizens were among the first passengers that day, before members of the general public were given free rides. The book contrasts historical images such as these with recent photographs of the same locations in St. John's.

IMAGES COURTESY FLANKER PRESS. TOP: THE ROOMS. LOWER: N.L.P. ARCHIVES

Queen of The Maple Leaf: Beauty Contests and Settler Femininity

by Patrizia Gentile
UBC Press, 292 pages, $32.95



Beauty pageants in twentieth-century Canada may have seemed like frivolous entertainment. However, according to the new book *Queen of the Maple Leaf: Beauty Contests and Settler Femininity*, contests searching for the "ideal Canadian girl" also functioned as tools to reinforce gender, race, and class anxieties in a white settler society.

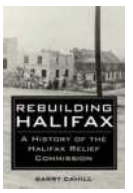
"As symbolic representations, beauty queens carry visual codes of what a nation and its communities highlight as ideal and valuable," writes author Patrizia Gentile, an associate professor in human rights and social justice as well as women's and gender studies at Carleton University.

Pageants put white bodies on display, Gentile argues, promoting settler values of individuality, respectability, and conformity. Emphasizing a "girl-next-door" ideal based on youth and purity not only helped to "sell a homogenous version of what it meant to be Canadian" but was attractive to corporate sponsors.

While *Queen of the Maple Leaf* focuses primarily on Miss Canada and other well-known contests, it also expertly examines workplace and union-run pageants, such as Miss War Worker and Queen of the Dress Makers, as well as yet others that involve Indigenous, immigrant, and Black bodies performing a version of settler femininity. Of interest for scholars in a variety of fields, *Queen of the Maple Leaf* is a fascinating look at how gender, race, and consumerism intersect with popular culture. — *Jessica Rose*

Rebuilding Halifax: A History of the Halifax Relief Commission

by Barry Cahill
Formac Publishing, 224 pages, $27.95



Rebuilding Halifax examines the Halifax Relief Commission that was formed after the December 1917 Halifax explosion. The catastrophic event occurred when a French cargo ship carrying explosives collided with a Norwegian vessel in the Narrows, the constricted entrance to the city's harbour. The explosion killed almost two thousand people and injured thousands more.

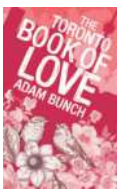
Author and independent historian Barry Cahill writes that "The banner headline in Halifax's *Evening Mail* of 27 May 1920 screamed, 'Halifax is Down for Thirty Million Dollars in Canada's Claim Against Germany for Reparation for War Losses.'" Nonetheless, Halifax's restoration process moved slowly, and the commission remained in operation for almost sixty years after the explosion.

Cahill specializes in the legal history of Atlantic Canada, and his book offers insight into how different levels of government in Canada tried to pass responsibility off to one another. As governments tried to decide who was responsible for aid and reconstruction, the process of getting Halifax back on its feet was delayed.

Rebuilding Halifax focuses on the politics and logistics of the explosion's aftermath, rather than the individual stories of people affected by the event. Cahill uses quotations from newspaper articles as well as statements made by politicians to round out the story. — *Sydney Lockhart*

The Toronto Book of Love

by Adam Bunch
Dundurn Press, 521 pages, $21.99



The stories in *The Toronto Book of Love* make for good bedtime reading — unless you are looking for tales of steamy romance and happily ever after. The Toronto-based unions described here are eclectic and entertaining but not necessarily enduring.

Adam Bunch reaches into the mists of time to describe the Wendat's free and easy courtship rituals. And oh, what a contrast they were to the buttoned-up prudishness practised by the colonizers.

Did Elizabeth Simcoe, the high-spirited wife of John Graves Simcoe, first lieutenant-governor of Upper Canada, have an affair with her husband's handsome young private secretary? Their diaries suggest that, but we'll never know for sure. We do know that when the Simcoes returned to England her possible paramour — Thomas Talbot — stayed behind, apparently heartbroken, and remained single for the rest of his life.

While the accounts in this book revolve around historical figures who have a link to Toronto, some of the connections are thin. Well-known personalities like Joni Mitchell and Margaret Trudeau are here, even though Toronto was never their home — they were only passing through. Bunch nonetheless delivers many cool stories that are well-told. — *Nelle Oosterom*

CanadasHistory.ca/Books

When you visit Chapters-Indigo via our website links and make any purchase, Canada's History Society receives a commission that supports our publishing and educational programs.

Far left: Julien Gagnon-Rouillard (second from right) and Robert Majewski (centre) at work during a shoot for their documentary series *Les Basques: ruralité, résistance, résilience*.

Left: The cover of the special edition magazine *50 merveilles de nos musées*.

Lower far left: A photograph of the Vimy memorial at Vimy Ridge, France, taken during a battlefields tour by a contributor to Projet Portage.

Lower left: Archaeologists search for artifacts during a dig at the site of historic Fort Ville-Marie in a scene from the online video series *Chroniques montréalaises*.

Connecting Canadians through Projet Portage

The Molson Foundation's bold initiative shares French-Canadian history with new audiences.

by Janet Walker and Brooke Campbell

In 2017, Canada's History Society set out on a five-year initiative, Projet Portage, that aims to share the stories of French Canadians. Our goal? To encourage an exchange of ideas and languages and to empower new generations of Canadian historians.

As a national history organization based in Winnipeg, it seemed to us that the journey we were embarking on might be similar to the travels of the voyageurs of New France. Their work in navigating complex networks of trade routes, and in forging links between diverse communities and regions, would serve as the inspiration for our mission.

With the help of some of Quebec's well-established museums and history societies, and encouraged by a financial investment from The Molson Foundation, Canada's History found and engaged a group of talented storytellers, young scholars, educators, and curators to make Projet Portage come alive.

The talent and passion of Quebec's community of historians and emerging storytellers is evident in the projects you will find at HistoireCanada.ca.

These projects, including the award-winning video series *Chroniques montréalaises*, reveal a range of themes, from Expo 67, to Montreal's red-light district, to the archaeological excavations of Canada's first parliament building. We created opportunities for Quebec writers and scholars to share their work widely; engaged documentarians to develop an online video capsule series on Les Basques; and commissioned a series of articles on religious history in Quebec.

Through Projet Portage, we also supported projects initiated by other storytelling organizations and provided a platform to assist them in extending their reach to national audiences.

We are proud to connect French- and English-speaking teachers, scholars, and leaders in the field of history through annual events and celebrations.

Through our administration of the Governor General's History Awards, we honour excellence in history, with many laureates hailing from Quebec and from French-Canadian communities elsewhere in Canada.

As we complete the fifth and final year of the pilot phase of this project, we celebrate its success in having established a wide network of partners, Molson Voyageurs, and contributors who are sharing more diverse stories of Canada. This valuable work includes the recent publication of a new French-language special-interest magazine, *50 Merveilles de nos musées*, that uses treasured museum objects to explore the stories of French Canada.

Copies of this special print publication, written by established and emerging French historians, can be purchased at CanadasHistory.ca/50Merveilles.

The tremendous success of Projet Portage is evident in a growing online community that is connected through social media, digital newsletters, and our website, and whose members are eager to discover exclusive pieces of content in French that speak to francophones and to French-Canadian culture across the country.

We'd love to hear from you. Your ideas and support will encourage us to continue this journey together and will help us to connect and to unite Canadians through a better understanding of our shared past.

TOP LEFT: JULIEN GAGNON-ROUILLARD TOP RIGHT: CANADA'S HISTORY. LOWER LEFT: LISE PROULX. LOWER RIGHT: CANADA'S HISTORY.

A real circus

My father, Kingdon C. Pooley, was born in Sydney, Australia. He served first in the Australian Army and then in the Royal Australian Air Force, and he met my mother, Lorna, while stationed in Winnipeg under the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan. He served overseas as a tail gunner with the RAAF, and after the Second World War he returned to Canada and married my mother.

Dad obtained a job with the Hudson's Bay Company in Vernon, B.C., before being transferred to the store in Port Alberni, B.C., where he was a manager. At some point around 1947 or 1948, when a travelling circus was nearby, Dad arranged for an elephant to come to the store. The schools in Port Alberni were closed for half a day so that the children could see the elephant. The event was quite a success!

After further postings at Red Lake, Ontario, and Yorkton, Saskatchewan, Dad continued working with the HBC until his retirement, including with the Northern Stores Department at Hudson's Bay House in Winnipeg.

Submitted by William Pooley of Winnipeg, son of Kingdon C. Pooley.

Do you have a black-and-white or colour photograph that captures a moment, important or ordinary, in Canada's history? If so, have it copied (please don't send priceless originals) and mail it to Album, c/o Canada's History, Bryce Hall, Main Floor, 515 Portage Avenue, Winnipeg, MB R3B 2E9. Or email your photo to album@CanadasHistory.ca. Please provide a brief description of the photo, including its date and location, details about people appearing in the photograph, and further information about the event or situation illustrated. Photos may be adjusted for presentation in the magazine.

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CANADA'S HISTORY SOCIETY

The importance of understanding Canada by examining the histories of its peoples has been an anchoring belief of Canada's History Society. Established in 1994 through the generous support of the Hudson's Bay Company History Foundation, we bring relevance and awareness to our nation's diverse past, illuminating the people, places, and events that unite us as Canadians.

The society's work includes: *Canada's History* magazine, *Kayak: Canada's History Magazine for Kids*, CanadasHistory.ca, and the Governor General's History Awards.

SOCIÉTÉ HISTOIRE CANADA

L'importance de comprendre notre propre identité par le truchement de l'histoire est au cœur de la philosophie de la Société Histoire Canada. Le travail de la Société, fondée en 1994 grâce au généreux soutien de la Fondation d'histoire de la Compagnie de la baie d'Hudson, consiste à faire connaître le passé diversifié de notre pays et à l'ancrer dans le contexte actuel, mais également à mettre en valeur les gens, les lieux et les événements qui nous unissent en tant que Canadiens.

La Société offre notamment aux Canadiens le magazine *Histoire Canada*, le magazine *Kayak : Navigue dans l'histoire du Canada*, le site HistoireCanada.ca et les Prix d'histoire du Gouverneur général.

CANADA'S HISTORY · HISTOIRE CANADA · Kayak

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